

ENQA TARGETED REVIEW

ESTONIAN
QUALITY AGENCY
FOR EDUCATION
(HAKA)

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17 FEBRUARY 2023

ENQA TARGETED
REVIEW 2023

enqa.

European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This targeted review report analyses compliance of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (Eesti Hariduse Kvaliteediagentuur, HAKA), formerly known as the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (Eesti Kõrg- ja Kutsehariduse Kvaliteediagentuur, EKKA), with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), following the methodology described in the Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews (last revised in June 2022).

HAKA is applying for renewal of membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) as well as for renewal of registration on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) based on a targeted external review, as it has undergone two successful reviews against the ESG Parts 2 and 3, in 2012 and 2017.

The review was conducted from June 2022 to December 2022, with a site visit conducted between 19 and 21 September 2022 in HAKA's office in Tallinn.

Established in 2009, HAKA is the Estonia's higher education quality assurance agency. The mission of HAKA is to promote quality in the field of education and thereby increase the competitiveness of the Estonian society.

In Estonia, HAKA offers the following external quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG: institutional accreditation, initial and re-assessment of study programme groups.

The international focus of the agency is evidenced through its participation in several quality networks, international projects and cross-border evaluations. HAKA offers the following quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG: institutional accreditation, accreditation of study programmes and accreditation of continuing education programmes.

Additionally, HAKA conducts a number of studies that provide transversal information and contribute to the overall quality improvement of the higher education system in Estonia.

According to the Terms of Reference, this targeted review has evaluated to what extent HAKA continues to fulfil the requirements of the ESG.

- ESG 2.1 has been addressed for all HAKA's activities within the scope of ESG.
- ESGs 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 have been addressed for the new activity: the accreditation of continuing education programmes that was introduced after the last review of the agency.
- HAKA has not had any partial compliance in the last review, but the panel took into consideration the notes from EQAR due to the last substantive changes in the agency that could affect standards 3.1, 3.3, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.5.

Additionally the panel considered ESG 3.4 (Thematic analysis) which was agency's self-selected enhancement area.

The panel finds HAKA compliant on all addressed ESGs.

During the review the panel found that HAKA's staff has demonstrated its four core values: impartiality, competence, cooperation and openness. HAKA's stakeholders displayed a high level of trust in the organisation and characterised it as a change-agent in the higher education system of Estonia.

Summary of agency's compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3)

ESG	Compliance according to the targeted review ¹	Compliance transferred from the last full review ²
2.1	Compliant	N/A
2.2	Compliant	
2.3	Compliant	
2.4	Compliant for new or changed QA activities only	Fully compliant → Compliant
2.5	Compliant	
2.6	Compliant for new or changed QA activities only	Fully compliant → Compliant
2.7	Compliant for new or changed QA activities only	Fully compliant → Compliant
3.1		Fully compliant → Compliant
3.2		Fully compliant → Compliant
3.3	Compliant	
3.4		Substantially Compliant → Compliant
3.5		Fully compliant → Compliant
3.6		Fully compliant → Compliant
3.7		Fully compliant → Compliant

¹ Compliance refers to the focus areas that were evaluated in depth and are part of the Terms of Reference, i.e., standards that were only partially compliant with the ESG during the last full review, ESG Part 2 for newly introduced or changed QA activities of the agency, ESG 2.1 for all QA activities and any standard affected by substantive changes since the last full review. If any of the standards of Part 2 of the ESG are covered due to the newly introduced or changed QA activities, a remark “for new or changed QA activities only” is added in brackets to the compliance assessment.

² Compliance refers to the last EQAR Register Committee decision for renewal of inclusion on the Register, or in case when an agency is not renewing its registration in EQAR, compliance refers to the last ENQA Agency Review report and should its judgement differ from that of the panel, the judgement of the ENQA Board, as stipulated in the membership decision letter by the ENQA Board. Compliance refers to the QA activities of the agency that were reviewed during the previous full review.

INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (Eesti Kõrg- ja Kutsehariduse Kvaliteediagentuur, EKKA), with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG). It is based on an external review conducted from June 2022 to December 2022 and should be read together with the external review report of the agency's last full review against the ESG.

It is important to highlight that as a result of the legal changes introduced into the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board, the name of the agency has changed on 12 June 2022, one day before the self-assessment report (SAR) was submitted. The new name is the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (Eesti Hariduse Kvaliteediagentuur, HAKA). This report is going to use the new name.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA's regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015.

Registration on EQAR is the official instrument established by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for demonstrating an agency's ESG compliance. An external review is a prerequisite for registration.

HAKA has been a member of ENQA and registered on EQAR since 2013. With this review HAKA is applying for renewal of ENQA membership and EQAR registration.

As HAKA has undergone two successful reviews against the ESG Parts 2 and 3, in 2012 and 2017, it was eligible and has opted for a targeted review. The purpose of a targeted review is to ensure the agency's compliance with the ESG by covering standards that were found partially compliant during the agency's last renewal of registration in EQAR, as well as standards that could have been affected by substantive changes³ during the past five years. At the same time, it is designed to strengthen the enhancement part of the review further.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

HAKA is carrying out the following activities within the scope of the ESG:

- Institutional Accreditation (at home and abroad)
- Initial and re-assessment of study programme groups (at home)
- Accreditation of study programmes (abroad)
- Accreditation of continuing education programmes (abroad)

The following activities of the applicant are outside the scope of the ESG:

- Initial assessment of study programme groups in VET
- Quality assessment of study programme groups in VET

³ e.g. organisational changes, the launch of new external QA activities.

- International development projects
- A pilot project for developing a quality assurance model for continuing education
- A pilot project for developing a quality assurance model for general education

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR), this targeted review will evaluate the extent to which HAKA continues to fulfil the requirements of the ESG. The review covers the following areas:

- Standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the accreditation of continuing education programmes.
- Standard 2.1 (Consideration of internal quality assurance) for all activities of HAKA.
- HAKA's self-selected enhancement area: ESG 3.4 (Thematic analysis).
- Standards affected by other types of substantive changes:
 - ESG 2.2, ESG 2.3 and ESG 2.5: Considering the revised criteria and procedures for institutional accreditation, the initial assessment and re-assessment of study programme groups and cross-border accreditation of study programmes.
 - ESG 3.1 and ESG 3.3: The review considers in particular how HAKA's director and the members of its assessment council are selected and appointed, what are the rules for dismissing its members, how the agency ensures its independence in its external assessments considering its close structural and operational interlink with the Ministry of Education and Research.

In the last review no standard had a partial compliance conclusion in the Register Committee's last renewal decision, in consequence this criteria does not apply.

The targeted review should also address other matters regarding ESG compliance that come up during the targeted review and that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG. In the case of HAKA's targeted review, the review panel did not identify any matters regarding ESG compliance that would need to be covered apart from the ones listed above and addressed in the ToR.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2017 REVIEW

According to the decision of the EQAR Register Committee, based on the previous full review conducted in 2017, HAKA was found to be in compliance with all the standards.

ESG Part 2: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7

ESG Part 3: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7

The panel acknowledges that no other changes occurred within the agency and thus acknowledges the status of the following ESG standards from the last full review for those activities that were addressed in the previous full review:

ESG Part 2: 2.4, 2.6, 2.7

ESG Part 3: 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7

REVIEW PROCESS

The 2022 external targeted review of HAKA was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews (last revised in June 2022)*, the EQAR Procedures for Applications, and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the targeted review of HAKA was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Tadej Tuma (Chair), academic (EUA nominee), Professor, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- Núria Comet Señal (Secretary), quality assurance professional (ENQA nominee), Responsible for the Internal Quality Assurance System and Project Coordinator, AQU Catalunya, Spain;
- Jakub Bakonyi, (Member) (ESU nominee, member of the European Students' Union Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool), Master student in public administration, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland.

Milja Homan (ENQA Project and Reviews Officer) acted as the review coordinator. The panel wishes to extend their thanks to Milja Homan for her contribution in assuring the smoothness of the visit and the overall quality of the review process.

The ENQA review panel received the self-assessment report (SAR), including some appendices, on 1 July 2022. After a preliminary analysis based on the information provided in the SAR, the panel requested additional information, which was promptly and extensively provided by the agency. Moreover, because not all documentation was available in English, the panel requested HAKA to translate some relevant documents.

The ENQA review coordinator organised a preparatory online briefing for the panel on 17th August 2022 including input from EQAR regarding the scope of the review. In addition, the review panel held some additional preparatory online meetings in July and September 2022.

The review panel furthermore held a preparatory online meeting with the agency on 14th September 2022.

Mrs. Karin Laansoo from HAKA acted as the agency's contact person to support the organisation of the review. The review panel appreciates her agility in resolving all the doubts that appeared during the process.

During the site visit, the panel also requested further information, which was provided immediately after the informative pre-visit meeting.

The panel conducted the site visit from 19 to 21 September 2022 in HAKA's office in Tallinn.

During the site visit, the review panel met with the agency's management and staff, its decision-making and evaluation bodies, as well as the representatives of the government of Estonia, higher education institutions, reviewers, and other stakeholders.

After the site visit, the review panel produced this final report based on the self-assessment report, additional information, the site visit and the panel's findings. As part of the report writing process, the panel provided an opportunity for HAKA to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report.

The review panel is very grateful to HAKA and its management and staff for the supportive and open attitude throughout the review, which contributed significantly to the work of the panel.

Self-assessment report

As described in the HAKA's self-assessment report (SAR), the process of preparing the SAR began in early 2021. HAKA joined the elaboration of the SAR with a mid-term review of the execution of HAKA's Development Plan 2017–2022, the process of preparing the new Development Plan for 2023–2027 and updating of the HAKA Quality Handbook.

All HAKA staff members, regardless of their involvement in ESG-related activities, were actively involved in this elaboration, which included development seminars where HAKA's mission statement,

vision and core values were discussed in detail and agreed among staff members. The SWOT analysis was elaborated involving HAKA staff as well as external stakeholders.

The chapters of the draft SAR were submitted to all HAKA staff members for critique, illustrating with examples and further clarification, as well as analysis of their strengths and areas that merit further attention.

In February 2022, a reference group of HAKA's 'critical friends' was convened to the end of collecting critical feedback from stakeholder representatives on HAKA's development agenda and the SAR for the agency review. The outcomes of meetings with the 'critical friends' group were shared with members of the Supervisory Board and all staff members and, as a result, some principles that had already been agreed on were reopened and reviewed.

In conclusion, as explained in the SAR, the self-assessment exercise has proved to be beneficial for HAKA in several ways:

- It gave an impetus to review their regulations/guidelines and introduce clarifications where necessary.
- Some essential processes (i.e., thematic analysis) were analysed and better defined.
- It contributed to integrating new staff members to the tight knit team at HAKA.
- It contributed to constructive and meaningful dialogue between HAKA staff and stakeholders, which gave them a broader perspective of the agency's present and future.

As it was a targeted review, the SAR has a new structure, including seven different chapters:

- Description of the changes since the last agency review: including legislative changes and the process of developing a new quality assurance framework for higher education in Estonia, changes in the agency's legal entity and structure and changes in HAKA's ESG related activities.
- Analysis of ESG Part 2 for the new activity: the accreditation of continuing education.
- Analysis of the targeted standards from the ESG Part 2: ESG 2.2, ESG 2.3 and ESG 2.5.
- Analysis of the targeted standards from the ESG Part 3: ESG 3.1 and ESG 3.3.
- Analysis of ESG 2.1.
- The enhancement standard selected by HAKA: ESG 3.4.
- SWOT analysis and links to all relevant additional documentation and information.

The SAR provided a basis for conducting the targeted review. The panel found it to be clear and comprehensive.

Site visit

The review panel agreed with ENQA and HAKA that the site visit should be conducted in Tallinn.

The site visit was spread across three days on 19-21 September 2022 in the HAKA's office in Tallinn; some interviewees participated using Zoom, which functioned smoothly.

During the three days, the panel had the opportunity to talk to all interviewees as foreseen in the visit schedule.

The panel appreciates the contributions from all members of the HAKA staff, and the members of the internal commissions, councils and boards. Their dedication and professionalism were visible throughout the visit.

The panel is also grateful to all the external participants (experts, representatives of government and institutions, employers and other external stakeholders) contributing to the review with their input, as this was very important in building an informed and rounded view on the agency's work.

For the detailed schedule of meetings, please see Annex I.

CHANGES WITHIN THE AGENCY

Since the last review, there have been several changes in the legislation of the higher education system in Estonia, many of which affected the HAKA's legal status, structure, and activities. The following sections describe these changes.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

During these last years Estonia's Higher Education system has undergone important **legislative changes**.

In 2017, the Ministry for Education and Research (MER) initiated stakeholder consultations to consolidate and harmonise higher education legislation. The idea was to replace the Universities Act and the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act with a single act covering the entire higher education landscape.

HAKA was an active stakeholder in this development.

The aim of the development process was to make the assessments less time and resource intensive, reducing overlaps between assessments and seeking ways to make them more interconnected, while maintaining the continuity of assessment processes. Another goal was to place special emphasis on previously overlooked assessment areas (e.g., mid-level management) and assessment areas for which previous assessments had indicated more cause for concern (e.g., internationalization). The process had two outcomes:

- The adoption of the Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation by the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education in February 2018.
- The adoption of the Higher Education Act in March 2019. The new law entered into force in September 2019 and introduced some important changes, as explained in the following table:

2017-2019 – Before the legal change	2019-2022 – After the legal change
Mandatory assessments	
Initial for acquiring the right to provide instruction in a study programme group.	Initial assessment for acquiring the right to provide instruction in a study programme group.
Regular quality assessments of study programme groups.	Not required. - The study programme group assessments in the first, second and third cycles of higher education were phased out.
Institutional accreditation at least once in every seven years.	Institutional accreditation at least once in every seven years. - The assessment of a sample of study programmes was added to the scope of institutional accreditation
Voluntary assessments	
	Accreditation of continuing education study programmes at EQF levels 6–8. Possible assessment of micro-credentials.
	Accreditation of study programs

HAKA'S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE

In 2020, there have been some changes in the agency's legal entity and structure.

On 1 August 2020, the former governing entity of HAKA – the Archimedes Foundation – along with three other entities was merged into a newly established public body called the Education and Youth Board. The Education and Youth Board is a governmental authority operating within the area of government of the Ministry of Education and Research under the Statutes established by the Minister on the basis of the Government of the Republic Act. The Statutes were adopted in June 2020 and amended twice: in December 2020 and in June 2022. Upon performance of its functions, the Education and Youth Board represents the state. The structural units of the Education and Youth Board are:

- Departments of the Education and Youth Board.
- The Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA) which performs independent functions.
- The Erasmus+ Estonian National Agency.

Quality assessment activities in HAKA cover: higher education, continuing education, vocational education and general education. The organisational structure of the agency reflects these activities.

Image : SAR



EKKA Secretariat

- Assessment Directors for Higher Education
- Assessment Director for Vocational Education
- Assessment Director for Continuing Education
- Assessment Director for General Education
- Training Director in Vocational Education
- Director for Development
- Information Manager
- Assessment Coordinators
- Educational Technologist
- Project Coordinator

HAKA is organised according to the following structure:

- The Supervisory Board, composed of 11 members representing the stakeholders related to the main functions of the HAKA, including 1 student.
- The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education formed by 13 member representing Estonian higher education institutions, including 2 students, Members are proposed by Universities, professional higher education institutions, research and development institutions, registered professional and trade associations, associations of employers, and associations of Student Bodies as stipulated in the Procedure for the formation of the HEQAC.
- The Quality Assessment Council for Vocational Education composed of 13 members representing Estonian Occupational Qualification Councils and employers, including 1 student.
- The Appeals Committee composed of 4 members, including 1 student.
- The Secretariat is composed of 17 people, whose workload is divided approximately as in the table provided by the organisation. It was declared that in the near future, 2 more people will join the agency to focus on general education.

	Higher Education	Vocational Education (VET)	Continuing education	General Education	Total Staff
Director	1				1
Director for Development	0,5		0,5		1
Assessment Directors	2	1	1	1	5
Assessment coordinator	1,5	1,5	2		5
Information Manager	0,5		0,5		1
Project Manager				1	1
Training Director (VET)/ Assessment coordinator		0,5	0,5		1
Project Coordinator (Finances, contracts)	1				1
Education Technologist	1				1

Another important thing is the change in the name of the agency – the new name now is Eesti Hariduse Kvaliteediagentuur (The Estonian Quality Agency for Education) and the acronym - HAKA. This change was entered into force on 12 June 2022, one day before the final version of the SAR was submitted.

HAKA'S FUNDING

As described in the Quality Handbook, HAKA's activities are funded from various sources:

- State budget resources (approximately 1/4 of HAKA's budget). The Estonian government finances regular external evaluation of higher education. The state budget covers both the costs directly associated with the external evaluations and the costs connected with broader quality developments of higher education (training, conferences, seminars, publications of results, analyses).
- Assessment fees for the right to provide instruction in higher and vocational education. A higher education institution, which wants to launch studies in a new study programme group covers the costs of the review itself. The rates and the calculations thereof are published on the HAKA's website.
- The European Social Fund (ESF).
- Cross-border quality assessments fees.
- International projects.

Regarding the state budget funds, every year, the Director of HAKA submits an application to the Ministry of Education and Research (MER), which is then discussed at the negotiations between MER and the Education and Youth Board.

In the SAR, HAKA has presented a table that provides an overview of the sources of financing of HAKA's activities and main expenditure areas. The agency claims that both the infrastructure and financial resources satisfy its needs.

HAKA'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES

Over the past five years, HAKA has carried out the following external quality assurance activities related to higher education:

External quality assurance activities	2018	2019	2020	2021	May 2022
<i>Higher education, including</i>	27	34	10	17	7
Institutional Accreditations	2	5	3	5	3
Quality Assessments of Study Programme Groups	19	25	6	8	1
Initial and Re-assessments of Study Programme Groups	6	4	1	4	3
Accreditations of Study Programmes	0	0	0	0	0

From the last review to 2022, there have been several changes **in the activities** inside the scope of the ESG:

In 2020:

- The adoption of the Guidelines for Initial Assessment and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups, which combined the guidelines for initial assessment and the guidelines for re-assessment of study programme groups into a single procedure to achieve more consistency.
- The modification of the Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes, which concerns the procedure for cross-border accreditation of study programmes.
 - Introducing more clear references to student-centred learning in its assessment process.
 - Providing for more flexibility in the composition of the review panels.

In 2021:

- EQAR Register Committee considered the activity “Accreditation of Continuing Education Study Programmes” (corresponding to EQF levels 6–8), which was designed upon a request by a foreign higher education institution. The aims, purpose and methodology is described in the Guidelines for the Accreditation of Continuing Education Programmes. The agency has performed only one assessment of this kind since launching of the activity in 2017.

In 2022:

- A simplified procedure was added to the Guidelines for Initial Assessment and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups for the assessment of joint study programmes that have already undergone an assessment by an EQAR-registered agency and received a positive result.

- A clause on follow-up was added to the Guidelines for Initial Assessment and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups, obliging the HEI to submit a progress report on the areas for improvements listed in the assessment decision 12 year after the adoption of the assessment decision by the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education.
- Some amendments were made into the Guidelines for the Accreditation of Continuing Education Programmes (corresponding to EQF levels 6–8):
 - The review panel now always includes a student representative.
 - The criteria for outcomes were clarified.

FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF HAKA WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG) WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

Aspects included in the Terms of the Reference related to ESG 3.1 and ESG 3.3 have been addressed jointly, because the content of the note is the same for both ESG. Due to the nature of the change (independence) the analysis is developed in ESG3.3. Regarding these two standards, there have not been other changes since the last review.

ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

2017 review recommendation

There has not been any recommendation in the last review.

2020 EQAR Substantive Change Report -ToR

ESG 3.1 and ESG 3.3: The review should in particular consider how HAKA's director and the members of its assessment council are selected and appointed, what are the rules for dismissing its members, how the agency ensures its independence in its external assessments considering its close structural and operational interlink with the Ministry of Education and Research.

Evidence

As explained in the previous chapter, HAKA's organisational structure was transferred from the Archimedes Foundation to the Education and Youth Board in 2020.

The new Statutes of the Education and Youth Board states that HAKA is a structural unit of the Education and Youth Board (Harno), which performs independent functions. It is not an independent legal entity (legal person). HAKA has its own visual identity, website, and other communication channels. HAKA also has its own budget and budgetary decisions are taken by the Director of HAKA, although they have to be formally ratified by the management of Harno to take effect. Likewise, decisions on the recruitment and dismissal of staff are taken by the Director of HAKA and ratified by Harno. Beyond that, the staff members are directly subordinate to the Director of HAKA. HAKA operates through the Secretariat, as well as several other bodies.

The Supervisory Board

The Supervisory Board comprises up to 11 members, currently it is composed of 9 members. The names and positions are published on the website. The Supervisory Board elects a chair and a vice-chair from among its members. A member of the Board cannot simultaneously act as a member of an assessment council.

The Supervisory Board of HAKA comprises representatives of their main stakeholders, which include educational institutions, students, employers' organisations and the Ministry of Education and Research. Each stakeholder nominates their representatives. No more than two members from one organisation can be members of the Supervisory Board. The composition is approved by the Minister of Education and Research for 4 years. Also, each organisation could propose to dismiss their representatives.

The actual members have been nominated by:

- the Estonian Rectors' Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences;
- the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- the Estonian Association for Advancement of Vocational Education;
- the Ministry of Education and Research (two members);
- the Estonian Rectors' Conference;
- the Estonian Student Union;
- the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund;
- the Estonian Employers' Confederation.

The main functions of the Supervisory Board, described in the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board, are:

- To make proposals related to the HAKA-related chapter of the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board and to approve amendments of the chapter.
- To elect members of the assessment councils, members of appeal committees and the director of HAKA.
- To approve the development plan and annual report of HAKA.
- To make recommendations on the development directions and activities of HAKA.
- To approve the procedure for election and removal of the director of HAKA.

The Supervisory Board meets regularly to deal with strategic issues, analyse official documents like the Statutes or elect members of the assessment councils, members of appeals committees. The minutes of all the meetings are publicly available (in Estonian).

Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education (HEQAC)

HAKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education consists of 13 experts in the fields of higher education and quality assessment of higher education and is supported by a secretary. Members of the Council are independent in their activities, acting in a personal capacity and not representing their organisations. The Assessment Council includes at least one expert from each broad area of study. The composition is publicly available on the website.

The Supervisory Board of HAKA appoints members of the HEQAC and approves the composition for three years. The maximum term of office of a member of the Council is six years. The HEQAC elects a chair and vice-chair from among its members by a simple majority of the members present.

The Procedure for Formation of the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education describes:

- The rules to select the members, from among the candidates submitted, in order to guarantee the independence.
- The cases to terminate the mandate of a member of the Quality Assessment Council member by the Supervisory Board.

The main functions, described in the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board, are:

- To approve the rules governing the principles of and procedure for higher education quality assessment;
- To approve the principles of formation of expert panels and qualification requirements of panel members;
- To make decisions on the institutional accreditation of higher education institutions and quality assessment of their study programme groups;
- To coordinate thematic review reports;
- To make an expert assessment of the quality of instruction when the right to provide education is applied for in a new study programme group.

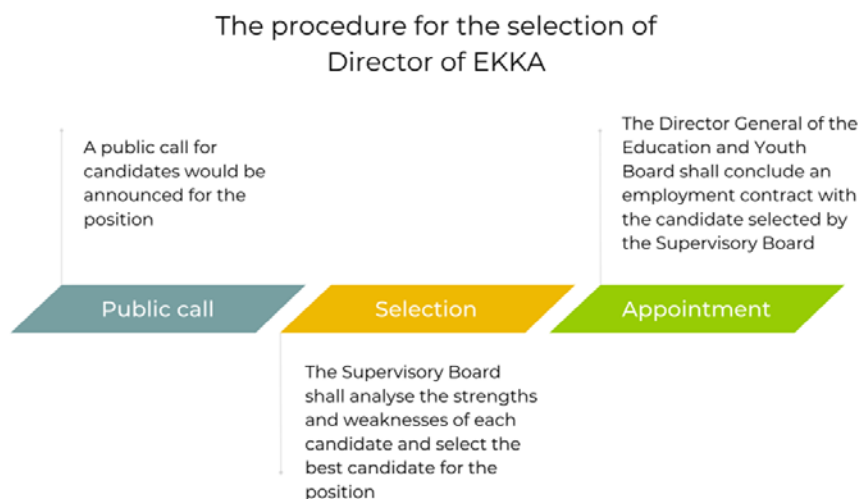
Director

HAKA is headed by the Director of HAKA, who is elected by the Supervisory Board and with whom the Director General of Education and Youth Board concludes an employment contract. There is no term limit for the Director's position.

The management and functioning of HAKA are described in the Quality Handbook. The Quality Handbook is a complete internal document that guides the performance of the activities for all the employees. It describes in detail the management and functioning of the organisation, the core activities, and the internal and external communication.

Responsibilities of the Supervisory Board include the selection of the Director of HAKA. According to the Statutes, the employment contract with the director of HAKA is entered into and terminated by the Director General of the Education and Youth Board on the basis of a decision of the Supervisory Board of HAKA.

On the other hand, the Statutes in § 24 (3) 5 state that the procedure for the selection and removal of the director of HAKA is approved by the Supervisory Board. This procedure for the selection of the Director of HAKA is described in the SAR with the following figure, but it is not developed in a document approved by the Supervisory Board as prescribed in the current Statutes neither in the Quality Handbook.



This procedure has never been applied; because no new director has been appointed since the agency was established in 2009.

Analysis

Due to the legal changes, the panel has analysed the official documentation as regards their agency's governing bodies:

- the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board
- the Procedure for Formation of the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education
- the Quality Handbook

These documents describe in a clear way how their members are nominated and appointed, and what are the rules and conditions for dismissing its members. Also, they prevent the influence of institutions or stakeholders on the findings, analysis, conclusions and recommendations. For example, the rules of the Supervisory Board limit the members from each organisation; in this sense only two members could come from the ministry.

Also, the panel has interviewed members of governing bodies (Supervisory Board and HEQAC) and representatives of the ministry. All of them attest the independence of the agency, even if HAKA is not a legal entity. The panel learned that there is a direct relationship between the Ministry and HAKA, in which the Education and Youth Board does not play a role.

In relation to the recruitment, nomination and appointment of experts the legal changes have not impacted how the agency takes care of these processes. In the same way, the definitions of its own procedures and methodologies or the independence of the formal outcomes have not been changed.

The role of HAKA in making strategic decisions in relation to higher education has been clearly attested by all the stakeholders interviewed. For example, the transition from programme accreditations to institutional accreditations was a proposal from HAKA and universities, approved by the Ministry.

The inclusion of general education in the scope of the activities of HAKA has been largely debated. The Ministry proposed that HAKA follows the quality model established in higher education in general education. The panel considers that as another evidence of the HAKA's significant role.

In conclusion, the legal changes have neither increased the level of independence of the agency and its bodies, nor have they decreased it. The close structural and operational interlink between the Ministry of Education and Research and the agency has not affected the independence of HAKA, its activities or decisions. The ministry takes into consideration the opinion, reports and publications of HAKA when making political decisions.

Panel suggestions for further improvement-01

The panel suggests including the detailed procedure for the selection and dismissal of the director in the Quality Handbook and in a procedure approved by the Supervisory Board.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG Part 2 is developed in two different sections:

- The analysis of all the standards of ESG part 2 for the new activity Accreditation of continuing education Programmes.
- The analysis of the standards 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.5 for all the activities of the agency affected by other types of substantive changes.

Introduction about the new activity:

In October 2017 HAKA conducted the accreditation of the continuing education programme “Border Security and Management for Senior Leadership Course” (BSMSL) – a blended learning course delivered by the OSCE Border Management Staff College located in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The assessment was based on the “Requirements and procedure for accreditation of study programmes in continuing education” adopted by the HAKA Assessment Council on 11 April 2017. In the last agency review (2017) this activity has not been considered.

As part of the preparations of the Terms of Reference for the targeted review, in November 2021, the EQAR Register Committee considered the “Accreditation of Continuing Education Programmes” activity.

Since then, there have been no other assessments under this activity. It is important to underline that the panel is assessing the accreditation of continuing education programmes on the basis of one single procedure and the accreditation was done in 2017, so the stakeholders involved had finished their work five years ago. Also, in consequence, there is only one report to analyse.

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part I of the ESG.

New activity: Accreditation of continuing education programmes

Evidence

HAKA’s Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Continuing Education (last revised in June 2022) have grouped the assessment criteria under five assessment areas:

- Assessment Area 4: Study programme and study programme development;
- Assessment Area 5: Learning and teaching;
- Assessment Area 6: Teaching staff;
- Assessment Area 7: Learners;
- Assessment Area 8: Resources.

Under each assessment area the institution needs to demonstrate how its procedures and practices ensure that the learners’ needs and educational objectives are supported. There is also a clause (point 21.5) in the Guidelines that grants the review panel the right to examine the internal quality assurance system for learning and teaching.

This is the table provided by HAKA during the site visit to show the match between internal quality processes described in Part I of the ESG and the current Guidelines used by HAKA for the accreditation of study programmes in continuing education (cross-border):

ESG standards and guidelines Part I	Accreditation of study programmes in continuing education (cross-border) <u>Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Continuing Education</u>
I.1: Policy for quality assurance	<p>4.2. Objectives, expectations, requirements of stakeholders are identified and defined. The goals and content of the learning offer are relevant for the target group, they are tailored to the needs of students.</p> <p>4.3 Relevant stakeholders, e.g., current and former students, teachers/trainers, funders and other relevant stakeholders are involved in the development of the educational offer. The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>5.6. Students and teachers' reflective feedback on the process and outcomes is collected, analysed, and taken into consideration on a regular basis.</p> <p>6.4 The teaching staff periodically receive feedback on their performance and top up their professional, pedagogical, and digital skills.</p> <p>8.4. Resource development is sustainable.</p> <p>Section 5(21.5) – Procedure (the committee) will examine the internal quality assurance system for teaching and learning.</p>
I.2: Design and approval of programmes	<p>4.1. Educational needs of (different) target groups as well as results of educational and societal trends and market research are used for developing educational offer.</p> <p>4.2. Objectives, expectations, requirements of stakeholders are identified and defined. The goals and content of the learning offer are relevant for the target group, they are tailored to the needs of students.</p> <p>4.3. Relevant stakeholders, e.g., current and former students, teachers/trainers, funders and other relevant stakeholders are involved in the development of the educational offer. The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>4.4. Learning outcomes, including transversal skills, are clearly defined, match the educational goals and, if applicable, are linked with current professional practice. 4.5. The content and structure of the study programme are consistent with its objectives and learning outcomes.</p> <p>4.6. Different parts of the study programme are logically integrated and form a coherent whole.</p>
I.3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	<p>5.1. Modern teaching methods with a strong student orientation are used in teaching. They are adapted to the needs and experiences of adult students.</p> <p>5.2. Teaching content and learning process are linked to the learning outcomes on the respective level of the EQF, if applicable.</p> <p>4.7. E-learning and blended learning offers are developed to cater to the needs and requirements of students and also to reach out to geographically dispersed target groups, if applicable.</p> <p>5.3. Teaching and learning materials (including e-learning materials) are up- to-date and appropriate to achieve learning outcomes.</p> <p>5.4. Assessment of learning outcomes (including recognition of prior learning and work experience) is transparent and objective. Where necessary, digital technologies, among other means, are used for assessment.</p> <p>5.5. The teaching process includes self-assessment and a formative performance assessment, i.e., an analysis of the individual student in his/her learning development. 5.6. Students and teachers' reflective feedback on the process and outcomes is collected, analysed, and taken into consideration on a regular basis.</p>

ESG standards and guidelines Part I	Accreditation of study programmes in continuing education (cross-border) <u>Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Continuing Education</u>
I.4: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	<p>4.7. E-learning and blended learning offers are developed to cater to the needs and requirements of students and also to reach out to geographically dispersed target groups, if applicable.</p> <p>7.1. Existing competencies and qualifications of students are assessed, and adequate placement is provided.</p> <p>7.2. Both the graduates of the study programmes and their employers are satisfied with their professional preparation and social competencies of the graduates.</p> <p>7.3. Detailed information on the educational offer (course programme) is made available to the potential students. It is spread sufficiently ahead of time before the start of courses.</p> <p>7.4. Counselling and instruction respect adults' needs.</p>
I.5: Teaching staff	<p>6.1. There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the learning and teaching.</p> <p>6.2. Practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.</p> <p>6.3. The teaching staff have adequate teaching and digital competences in order to support the autonomy of students and ensure adequate and professional supervision.</p> <p>6.4. The teaching staff periodically receive feedback on their performance and top up their professional, pedagogical, and digital skills.</p> <p>6.5. Institutional structures and means of communication, information and cooperation ensure a good working climate and foster teamwork, including team-teaching, among teaching staff.</p>
I.6: Learning resources and student support	<p>4.7. E-learning and blended learning offers are developed to cater to the needs and requirements of students and also to reach out to geographically dispersed target groups, if applicable.</p> <p>5.3. Teaching and learning materials (including e-learning materials) are up- to-date and appropriate to achieve learning outcomes.</p> <p>7.4. Counselling and instruction respect adults' needs.</p> <p>8.1. Adequate physical and financial resources support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.</p> <p>8.2. State of the art and fit for purpose information and communication technological solutions, including study information system, document management system, online learning environment, support learning and teaching.</p> <p>8.3. Digital learning and teaching as well as IT support is available to students and teaching staff.</p>

ESG standards and guidelines Part I	Accreditation of study programmes in continuing education (cross-border) <u>Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Continuing Education</u>
I.7: Information management	<p>6.5. Institutional structures and means of communication, information and cooperation ensure a good working climate and foster teamwork, including team-teaching, among teaching staff.</p> <p>8.2. State of the art and fit for purpose information and communication technological solutions, including study information system, document management system, online learning environment, support learning and teaching.</p> <p>4.2. Objectives, expectations, requirements of stakeholders are identified and defined. The goals and content of the learning offer are relevant for the target group, they are tailored to the needs of students.</p> <p>4.3 Relevant stakeholders, e.g., current and former students, teachers/trainers, funders and other relevant stakeholders are involved in the development of the educational offer. The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>5.6. Students and teachers' reflective feedback on the process and outcomes is collected, analysed, and taken into consideration on a regular basis.</p>
I.8: Public information	<p>7.3. Detailed information on the educational offer (course programme) is made available to the potential students. It is spread sufficiently ahead of time before the start of courses.</p> <p>8.2. State of the art and fit for purpose information and communication technological solutions, including study information system, document management system, online learning environment, support learning and teaching.</p>
I.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	<p>4.3. Relevant stakeholders, e.g., current and former students, teachers/trainers, funders and other relevant stakeholders are involved in the development of the educational offer. The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>4.2. Objectives, expectations, requirements of stakeholders are identified and defined. The goals and content of the learning offer are relevant for the target group, they are tailored to the needs of students.</p> <p>4.4. Learning outcomes, including transversal skills, are clearly defined, match the educational goals and, if applicable, are linked with current professional practice.</p> <p>5.6. Students and teachers' reflective feedback on the process and outcomes is collected, analysed, and taken into consideration on a regular basis.</p>
I.10: Cyclical external quality assurance	<p>This standard is dependent on the legal provisions of the respective foreign country.</p> <p>HAKA assumes that the responsibility for eliminating shortcomings pointed out in the assessment report and for continuous improvement activities lies with the provider institution. HAKA requests that, one years after the accreditation decision was adopted by the Council, the provider who was granted accreditation for five years submit a written overview of its activities, planned, and implemented based on the recommendations made in the assessment report, along with the results of such activities. (Chapter VII. Follow-up activities)</p>

Analysis

The assessment criteria described in the Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Continuing Education explicitly refer to the ESG Part I as their basis.

It is also evident to the panel that the HAKA's standards for this kind of accreditation are built on HAKA's knowledge of the ESG and their experience in similar reviews, such as the assessment of law study programmes in Moldova (that was considered during the last agency review).

All activities of HAKA

2017 review recommendation

HAKA must reconsider its approach to reviewing institutional compliance with the ESG standards on internal quality assurance in the three areas omitted from its mapping. The gaps in its framework in relation to information management and reporting on the new guidelines for Ph.D. Study Programmes should be addressed. On initial assessments, the approach should address comprehensively all of ESG, Part I, particularly on Teaching and Learning (Standard I.3).

Evidence

The new Higher Education Act was adopted in March 2019 and entered into force in September 2019. This new Act introduced several important changes, explained in the previous chapter of this report.

Due to this change of law, HAKA has updated its processes.

- The study programme group assessments in the first, second and third cycles of higher education were phased out.
- The institutional accreditation standards and procedure were overhauled and the assessment of a sample of study programmes was added to the scope of institutional accreditation. Study programmes are assessed on a sampling basis during the accreditation review. When defining a sampling, HAKA takes into account the number of study programmes at the HEI, the results of prior assessments of study programme groups and a justified proposal by the HEI. The sampling may comprise one to ten study programmes, depending on the number of study programme groups and programmes at the HEI. Consequently, HAKA has renewed the Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation and the Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups.
- A clause on follow-up was added to the Guidelines for the Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups, placing an obligation on the HEI to submit a progress report on the areas for improvement listed in the assessment decision one year from the adoption of the assessment decision by the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education.

The amended Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes, which concerns the procedure for cross border accreditation of study programmes, were adopted. HAKA revised its assessment criteria by introducing more clear references to student-centred learning in its assessment process and by providing for more flexibility in the composition of the review panels. Also, the procedure for assessing progress made on a secondary condition was added and the procedure for challenging the assessment procedure or decision was clarified in the Guidelines.

The three processes address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part I of the ESG. The mapping of ESG part I and the Guidelines are described in the following table proposed by HAKA.

<p>ESG Part I</p>	<p>Institutional Accreditation: Guidelines for institutional accreditation See Part II Standards and guidelines for institutional accreditation</p>	<p>Initial assessment of study programme groups Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for initial and re-assessment</p>	<p>Accreditation of study programmes (cross-border) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for the accreditation of study Programmes</p>
<p>1.1: Policy for quality assurance Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.</p>	<p>8.1: Strategic Management Standard: Development planning at the higher education institution is purposeful and systematic, involving various stakeholders. The higher education institution regularly evaluates the achievement of its stated objectives and the impact of its activities.</p> <p>8.3: Quality Culture Standard: The higher education institution has defined the quality of its core and support processes, and the principles of quality assurance. In the higher education institution, internal evaluation supports strategic management and is conducted regularly at different levels (institution, units, study programmes). The findings of internal and external evaluations are analysed, and quality improvement activities implemented.</p> <p>Guidelines: The HEI has established its policies and procedures for internal quality assurance (internal evaluation). The regular internal quality assurance both at the institutional and study programme level takes into account, inter alia, the standards set out in these Guidelines. All members of the HEI, including students and external stakeholders, participate in internal evaluations. Internal evaluation is based on the following key questions in quality management: What do you want to achieve, and why? How do you want to do it? How do you know that the activities are</p>	<p>1.1. Launching and developing of the study programme is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national development plans and analyses (including labour market and advisability analyses) and strives for top quality.</p> <p>1.3. The study programme meets the requirements and trends in international legislation that regulate the professional field and if a professional standard exists, takes into consideration the acquisition and implementation of the knowledge and skills described therein.</p> <p>3.7. Regular internal assessment is conducted in the study programme group, including the analysis and taking into account of feedback from various stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, academic staff).</p> <p>7.1. The higher education institution has a development plan along with an action plan aimed at ensuring the sustainability of high-quality studies in the higher education institution as a whole as well as in the study programme group under assessment. In the case of a brand-new higher education institution, a development plan and draft action plan exist.</p> <p>7.2. When planning studies in the study programme group, the higher education institution has conducted a risk analysis and devised a long-term financial projection, which among other things includes the calculation of a student place, an analysis of risks stemming from the operating environment and planned mitigating measures thereof.</p>	<p>30.5. (the expert panel) will examine the internal quality assurance system for teaching and learning</p> <p>9.1. Launching and developing of the study programme is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national legislation, international trends and standards that regulate the professional field and if professional standard exists, takes into consideration the acquisition and implementation of the knowledge and skills described therein.</p> <p>9.3. The objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme are in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The content of the study programme is internationally comparable.</p> <p>10.9. Systematic analysis of achievement of learning outcomes is performed and improvement measures are undertaken. Regular internal assessment is conducted in the study programme group, including the analysis and taking into account of feedback from various stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, academic staff)</p> <p>12.4. Students are involved in the decision-making process at different levels of the higher education institution.</p>

<p>ESG Part I</p>	<p>Institutional Accreditation: Guidelines for institutional accreditation See Part II Standards and guidelines for institutional accreditation</p>	<p>Initial assessment of study programme groups Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for initial and re-assessment</p>	<p>Accreditation of study programmes (cross-border) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for the accreditation of study Programmes</p>
	<p>effective and will have the desired impact? Is there an equilibrium between the desired outcomes and the resources used for their achievement (including technological solutions)? How do you manage quality improvement activities? Standard 8.4: Academic Ethics Standard: The higher education institution has defined its principles for academic ethics, has a system for disseminating them among its members, and has a code of conduct including guidelines for any cases of non-compliance with these principles. The higher education institution has a functioning system for handling complaints.</p>		
<p>1.2: Design and approval of programmes Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.</p>	<p>8.7: Study programme Standard: Study programmes are designed and developed while taking into account the expectations of stakeholders, higher education and professional standards, and trends in the relevant fields. The objectives of study programmes, modules and courses and their planned learning outcomes are specific and coherent. Guidelines: The planned learning outcomes are in accord with the requirements for the corresponding level of the Estonian Qualifications Framework, and in planning them the HEI has taken into account the future needs, among other things.</p>	<p>1.1. Launching and developing of the study programme is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national development plans and analyses (including labour market and advisability analyses) and strives for top quality. 1.2. Employers and other stakeholders of the study programme group are involved in the study programme's development. 1.3. The study programme meets the requirements and trends in international legislation that regulate the professional field and if a professional standard exists, takes into consideration the acquisition and implementation of the knowledge and skills described therein. 1.4. The learning outcomes of the study programme are equivalent and comparable to the learning outcomes of the academic cycles of higher education described in Annex 1</p>	<p>9.1. Launching and developing of the study programme is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national legislation, international trends and standards that regulate the professional field and if professional standard exists, takes into consideration the acquisition and implementation of the knowledge and skills described therein. 9.2. The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme. 9.3. The objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme are in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The content of the study programme is internationally comparable.</p>

<p>ESG Part I</p>	<p>Institutional Accreditation: Guidelines for institutional accreditation See Part II Standards and guidelines for institutional accreditation</p>	<p>Initial assessment of study programme groups Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for initial and re-assessment</p>	<p>Accreditation of study programmes (cross-border) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for the accreditation of study Programmes</p>
		<p>of the Standard of Higher Education. 1.6. The joint study programme and cooperation agreement thereof meet the requirements set in subsections 11 and 19 of the Higher Education Act.</p>	<p>9.5. Development of a study programme takes into consideration the needs of the labour market. 9.8. Study programme development is a continuous process which, among others, involves feedback from students, employers, and other relevant stakeholders.</p>
<p>1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach</p>	<p>8.7: Study Programme. Standard: The study programmes support creativity, entrepreneurship, and development of other general competencies. 8.8: Learning and Teaching Standard: Admission requirements and procedure ensure fair access to higher education and the formation of a motivated student body. The higher education institution systemically implements a student-centred approach that guides students to take responsibility for their studies and career planning and supports creativity and innovation. Guidelines: Learning and teaching process takes into account students' individual abilities and needs and supports their development. Learning offers sufficient challenge for students at different levels. Students participate in planning and implementation of the learning process. Organisation of independent work and faceto-face teaching motivates students to take responsibility for their studies. 8.9: Student assessment Standard: Assessments of students, including</p>	<p>2.3. Planned study methods motivate learners to take charge of their studies and achieve learning outcomes. 2.4. Appropriate methods and means (incl. the use of digital technologies) are planned for the assessment of learning outcomes; assessment is transparent, objective and supports the development of students. 2.5. The content and volume of independent work and practical training (in the case of doctoral studies, implementation of professional activities) support the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme. 2.6. The academic staff members to be involved have adequate teaching and digital competences in order to support the autonomy of students and ensure adequate and professional supervision. 3.5. The higher education institution has devised a plan for fostering international (including virtual) mobility among students enrolled in the study programme group. 3.6. The higher education institution implements fair and transparent rules for dealing with complaints.</p>	<p>10.2. The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development and motivate learners to take charge of their studies and achieve learning outcomes. 10.3. Teaching methods and learning tools used in the teaching process are modern, appropriate and effective, and support the achievement of learning outcomes, including general competences. 10.5. Appropriate methods are used for the assessment of learning outcomes; assessment is transparent, objective and supports the development of students. Where necessary, digital technologies among other means are used for assessment. Members of teaching staff cooperate in defining assessment criteria and apply similar approaches in assessments. 10.6. The higher education institution has in place rules for academic recognition as well as for recognizing prior studies and work experience. 10.7. Practical training (in doctoral studies applied professional activities) is regulated, requirements for the completion of practical training have been laid down and preliminary agreements concluded with organisations</p>

<p>ESG Part I</p>	<p>Institutional Accreditation: Guidelines for institutional accreditation See Part II Standards and guidelines for institutional accreditation</p>	<p>Initial assessment of study programme groups Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for initial and re-assessment</p>	<p>Accreditation of study programmes (cross-border) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for the accreditation of study Programmes</p>
	<p>recognition of their prior learning and work experiences, support the process of learning and are consistent with expected learning outcomes.</p>		<p>offering opportunities for practical training.</p>
<p>I.4: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.</p>	<p>8.8: Learning and Teaching Standard: Admission requirements and procedure ensure fair access to higher education and the formation of a motivated student body. The higher education institution systemically implements a student-centred approach that guides students to take responsibility for their studies and career planning and supports creativity and innovation. Guidelines: The academic recognition of foreign qualifications is based on international conventions, agreements between countries, and the Estonian legislation. 8.9: Student Assessment: Standard: Assessments of students, including recognition of their prior learning and work experiences, support the process of learning and are consistent with expected learning outcomes. Guidelines: When recognising prior learning and work experience towards the completion of the study programme, results obtained through the studies and work experiences (the achieved learning outcomes) are assessed. 8.10 Learning support systems Standard: (...) Students' individual development and</p>	<p>2.1. Conditions for admission and graduation are clear and transparent; requirements to prospective students stem from prerequisites for the completion of the study programme. 2.5. The content and volume of independent work and practical training (in the case of doctoral studies, implementation of professional activities) support the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme. 3.1. The organisation of studies is unambiguously regulated and information thereof publicly available; it allows to cater for the needs of different learners as well as specificities of the study programme group. 3.3. The higher education institution has in place rules for academic recognition as well as for recognizing prior studies and work experience. 3.4. Students have access to counselling (study and career counselling and preferably psychological counselling); measures for monitoring and supporting academic progress of students have been devised.</p>	<p>12.1. Conditions for admission and graduation are clear and transparent and ensure fair access to higher education and the formation of a motivated student body; requirements to prospective students stem from prerequisites for the completion of the study programme. 12.2. The student counselling system (including study, career, and psychological counselling) is targeted and effective. The HEI has a functioning system to support and advise international students 12.5. Fair and transparent rules for dealing with complaints are used in the study programme group. 12.6. A system has been established for the detection and prevention of academic fraud. 12.7. The higher education institution has a tracking mechanism of graduates' employment and monitors the evolution of graduates' career. 12.8. A system is in place for monitoring academic progress. Effective measures are implemented to reduce drop-out rates. 10.1. The organisation of studies is unambiguously regulated and information thereof publicly available. In course of study management development, the results of feedback surveys and the analysis of learning activities are taken into account.</p>

<p>ESG Part I</p>	<p>Institutional Accreditation: Guidelines for institutional accreditation See Part II Standards and guidelines for institutional accreditation</p>	<p>Initial assessment of study programme groups Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for initial and re-assessment</p>	<p>Accreditation of study programmes (cross-border) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for the accreditation of study Programmes</p>
	<p>academic progress are monitored and supported.</p>		
<p>I.5: Teaching staff Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.</p>	<p>8.2: Resources Standard: The higher education institution develops its staff and manages its physical and financial resources in a purposeful, systematic, and sustainable manner. Guidelines: The HEI has an efficient staff development system in terms of both academic and support staff. The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development are based on the objectives of the HEI's development plan and are fair and transparent. The principles for employees' remuneration and motivation are defined, available to all employees, and followed.</p> <p>8.6: Teaching staff Standard: Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of learners and value their own continuous self-development. Guidelines: The HEI supports systematically the development of its teaching staff. Members of the teaching staff engage in development of their professional, teaching and digital competences, improve their supervision competence, and share best practices with one another. When assessing the work of teaching staff (including</p>	<p>4.1. Requirements for academic staff are based on the Higher Education Standard and further rules put in place by the higher education institution, procedures for the selection and recruitment of staff are fair and transparent. 4.2. The qualifications of prospective academic staff members meet the requirements laid down in legislation as well as those stemming from the specificities of the study programme group and academic cycle. 4.3. The number of academic staff to be involved in the study programme group is adequate and enables achieving the objectives of the study programmes as well as the learning outcomes. 4.4. Prospective academic staff members regularly engage in continuing education at institutions of higher education or research from abroad, take part in international research projects and deliver presentations at high level conferences. 4.5. The higher education institution has plans for creating opportunities for continuing education and personal development (including for topping up digital skills) for academic staff members involved in the study programme group, including for benefitting from international mobility opportunities. 7.3. The age structure of academic staff to be involved as well as share of young teachers ensures sustainability of instruction provision in the study programme group.</p>	<p>11.1. The number and qualification of full-time teaching staff complies with the requirements established by legislation. 11.2. Distribution of full-time teaching staff by age and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff ensure the sustainability of studies in a higher education institution and a study programme. 11.3. The total number and qualification of teaching staff is – based on their responsibilities, workload, and the number of supervised students – sufficient and adequate for achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme. 11.4. The academic staff members have adequate teaching and digital competences in order to support the autonomy of students and ensure adequate and professional supervision. 11.5. The staff development system is effective: members of teaching staff have opportunities for self-improvement and engage in the improvement of their teaching methods. 11.6. Visiting members of teaching staff (including from foreign higher education institutions) are involved in teaching in the study programme under assessment. 11.7. The full-time teaching staff members of the higher education institution regularly develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions and</p>

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	<p>their periodical evaluations), the effectiveness of their teaching as well as their research, development and creative work is taken into account, including student feedback, the effectiveness of their student supervision, development of their teaching; supervisory and digital competences, their international mobility, and their entrepreneurial experience or other work experience in their fields of speciality outside the HEI.</p>		<p>participate in international networks. 11.8. The level and volume of research, development and creative activities of academic staff is sufficient to provide instruction and supervise academic work by students in the appropriate cycle of higher education. Teaching staff are involved in national and international research projects and participate in forums, national and international scientific conferences. 11.9. Members of teaching staff present their research results as well as the latest scientific achievements in their areas of specialisation to the students and involve students in their R&D projects where possible. 11.10. Assessment of the work by members of teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.</p>
<p>1.6: Learning resources and student support Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.</p>	<p>8.2: Resources Standard: The higher education institution develops its staff and manages its physical and financial resources in a purposeful, systematic, and sustainable manner. Guidelines: Allocation of the HEI's financial resources is based on the objectives of its development plan. The management and development of its infrastructure (buildings, laboratories, classrooms, digital infrastructure, etc.)</p>	<p>5.1. There are facilities (lecture rooms, labs, seminar rooms, rooms for independent work by students etc.) available for studies and study-related research, development and creative activities; these are adequately furnished and equipped with up-to-date equipment needed for achieving the objectives of the study programmes; or alternatively concrete financing decisions/projects exist in order to meet the extended needs. 5.2. The making available of up-to-date textbooks; research publications and other study</p>	<p>12.2. The student counselling system (including study, career, and psychological counselling) is targeted and effective. The HEI has a functioning system to support and advise international students. 13.1. The financial resources of the higher education institution are adequate for conducting studies, development activities related to studies and supporting the development of teaching staff. 13.3. There are facilities (lecture rooms, labs, seminar</p>

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	<p>are fit-for-purpose and economically sound. The infrastructure is regularly analysed (including the network, digital equipment, software and services, IT systems, user support, digital security etc.), taking into consideration among others the needs of students, teaching staff and other members of the HEI personnel. There are sufficient funds available for the updating of the infrastructure for learning, teaching and research; and/or a strategy exists for their acquisition. 8.10: Learning support systems Standard: The higher education institution ensures that all students have access to academic, career and psychological counselling. Students' individual development and academic progress are monitored and supported.</p>	<p>materials as well as providing access to research databases necessary for conducting studies, research, development and creative activities in the study programme group is ensured. 5.3. State of the art and fit for purpose information and communication technological solutions, including study information system, document management system, online learning environment, have been envisioned in order to support learning and teaching. Digital learning and teaching as well as IT support is available to students and teaching staff. 6.1. The educational institution has adequate funds necessary for conducting high quality studies in the study programme group as well as for the provision of adequate and up-to-date support services and supporting the development of academic staff. institution as a whole as well as in the study programme group under assessment. In the case of a brand-new higher 3.4. Students have access to counselling (study and career counselling and preferably psychological counselling); measures for monitoring and supporting academic progress of students have been devised.</p>	<p>rooms, rooms for independent work by students etc.) available for studies and study related research, development and creative activities; these are adequately furnished and equipped with up-to-date equipment needed for achieving the objectives of the study programmes. 13.4. State of the art and fit for purpose information and communication technological solutions, including study information system, document management system, online learning environment support learning and teaching. Digital learning and teaching as well as IT support is available to students and teaching staff. 13.5. A library supports the conduct of studies ensuring that up-to-date information sources (including electronic databases) are available and provides students with opportunities for independent work.</p>
<p>I.7: Information management Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.</p>	<p>8.1: Strategic management Standard: The higher education institution regularly evaluates the achievement of its stated objectives and the impact of its activities. Guidelines: The HEI has formulated the objectives and key results for its core activities – learning and teaching; research, development and creative activities, and service</p>	<p>5.3. State of the art and fit for purpose information and communication technological solutions, including study information system, document management system, online learning environment, have been envisioned in order to support learning and teaching. Digital learning and teaching as well as IT support is available to students and teaching staff. 3.7. Regular internal assessment is conducted in the study</p>	<p>9.1. Launching and developing of the study programme is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national legislation, international trends and standards that regulate the professional field and if professional standard exists, takes into consideration the acquisition and implementation of the</p>

<p>ESG Part I</p>	<p>Institutional Accreditation: Guidelines for institutional accreditation See Part II Standards and guidelines for institutional accreditation</p>	<p>Initial assessment of study programme groups Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for initial and re-assessment</p>	<p>Accreditation of study programmes (cross-border) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for the accreditation of study Programmes</p>
	<p>to society – taking into account national priorities and the needs of society, focusing on its strengths and reducing unnecessary duplication both within the HEI and throughout higher education in Estonia. 8.2: Resources Standard: The higher education institution develops its staff and manages its physical and financial resources in a purposeful, systematic, and sustainable manner. Internal and external communications of the higher education institution (including marketing and image-building) are targeted and managed. Guidelines: The infrastructure is regularly analysed (including the network, digital equipment, software and services, IT systems, user support, digital security etc.), taking into consideration among others the needs of students, teaching staff and other members of the HEI personnel. The HEI has defined information protection rules (including on data protection and the protection of user privacy) and these are implemented. The development and security of the online learning and teaching environment are ensured. The online learning and teaching environment allows to identify the authorship of student work. The HEI has a functioning system for internal and external communications,</p>	<p>programme group, including the analysis and taking into account of feedback from various stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, academic staff) 7.2. When planning studies in the study programme group, the higher education institution has conducted a risk analysis and devised a long-term financial projection, which among other things includes the calculation of a student place, an analysis of risks stemming from the operating environment and planned mitigating measures thereof.</p>	<p>knowledge and skills described therein. 9.3. The objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme are in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The content of the study programme is internationally comparable. 9.5. Development of a study programme takes into consideration the needs of the labour market. 9.8. Study programme development is a continuous process which, among others, involves feedback from students, employers, and other relevant stakeholders. 10.1. The organisation of studies is unambiguously regulated and information thereof publicly available. In course of study management development, the results of feedback surveys and the analysis of learning activities are taken into account. 10.9. Systematic analysis of achievement of learning outcomes is performed and improvement measures are undertaken. Regular internal assessment is conducted in the study programme group, including the analysis and taking into account of feedback from various stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, academic staff) 11.10. Assessment of the work by members of teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their</p>

<p>ESG Part I</p>	<p>Institutional Accreditation: Guidelines for institutional accreditation See Part II Standards and guidelines for institutional accreditation</p>	<p>Initial assessment of study programme groups Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for initial and re-assessment</p>	<p>Accreditation of study programmes (cross-border) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for the accreditation of study Programmes</p>
	<p>relevant to the target audiences.</p> <p>8.3: Quality culture Standard: In the higher education institution, internal evaluation supports strategic management and is conducted regularly at different levels (institution, units, study programmes). The findings of internal and external evaluations are analysed, and quality improvement activities implemented.</p> <p>Guidelines: The regular internal quality assurance both at the institutional and study programme level takes into account, inter alia, the standards set out in these Guidelines. All members of the HEI, including students and external stakeholders, participate in internal evaluations. Internal evaluation of study programmes results in feedback from experts within the HEI and/or from outside it. Regular reviews and enhancements of study programmes ensure their relevance, including their compliance with international trends.</p> <p>8 10: Learning support systems Guidelines: The HEI analyses the reasons students withdraw from studies or drop out and takes steps to increase the effectiveness of the studies.</p> <p>To carry out studies and research, development and creative activities, the availability of up-to-date study and research literature, other study materials and tools</p>		<p>teaching skills, and their international mobility.</p>

<p>ESG Part I</p>	<p>Institutional Accreditation: Guidelines for institutional accreditation See Part II Standards and guidelines for institutional accreditation</p>	<p>Initial assessment of study programme groups Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for initial and re-assessment</p>	<p>Accreditation of study programmes (cross-border) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for the accreditation of study Programmes</p>
	<p>(including those for independent work) and access to research databases is ensured. Study literature, materials and other teaching aids are of equally high quality. To support study activities, timely and relevant information and communication technology solutions have been planned, including the study information system, document management, online learning environments, analytical tools for teaching and learning. Support for online learning and IT is available to students. The HEI monitors student satisfaction with the counselling services, the online learning and IT support provided and makes changes as needed.</p>		
<p>1.8: Public information Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.</p>	<p>8.2: Resources Guidelines: The HEI has a functioning system for internal and external communications, relevant to the target audiences. The information made public about HEI's activities (including study programmes) and the findings of external evaluations is correct, up to date, easily accessible and understandable. The HEI has a system to popularise its core activities and academic career opportunities. 8.12: Service to the society Standard: The higher education institution initiates and implements development activities, which enhance prosperity in the community and disseminate</p>	<p>3.1. The organisation of studies is unambiguously regulated and information thereof publicly available; it allows to cater for the needs of different learners as well as specificities of the study programme group. 6.3. Financial reports for the higher education institution or keeper thereof are publicly available. Annual reports for the higher education institution or keeper thereof have undergone financial auditing unless stipulated otherwise in legislation.</p>	<p>9.9. The information about study programme on the website of the higher education institution is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible. 12.1. Conditions for admission and graduation are clear and transparent and ensure fair access to higher education and the formation of a motivated student body; requirements to prospective students stem from prerequisites for the completion of the study programme 10.1. The organisation of studies is unambiguously regulated and information thereof publicly available. In course of study management development, the results of feedback surveys and the analysis of learning activities are taken into account.</p>

<p>ESG Part I</p>	<p>Institutional Accreditation: Guidelines for institutional accreditation See Part II Standards and guidelines for institutional accreditation</p>	<p>Initial assessment of study programme groups Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for initial and re-assessment</p>	<p>Accreditation of study programmes (cross-border) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for the accreditation of study Programmes</p>
	<p>recent know-how in the areas of the institution's competence. Guidelines: The HEI takes advantage of digital means in order to provide trainings and services to the public at large.</p>		
<p>1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.</p>	<p>8.3: Quality culture Guidelines: The HEI has established its policies and procedures for internal quality assurance (internal evaluation). The regular internal quality assurance both at the institutional and study programme level takes into account, inter alia, the standards set out in these Guidelines. All members of the HEI, including students and external stakeholders, participate in internal evaluations. Internal evaluation of study programmes results in feedback from experts within the HEI and/or from outside it. Regular reviews and enhancements of study programmes ensure their relevance, including their compliance with international trends. In the course of internal evaluations, peer learning, comparisons with other HEIs regarding their results and means for achievement, as well as a sharing of best practices take place, among other things.</p> <p>8.7: Study programme Standard: Study programmes are designed and developed while taking into account the expectations of stakeholders, higher education and professional standards, and trends in the relevant fields.</p>	<p>1.1. Launching and developing of the study programme is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national development plans and analyses (including labour market and advisability analyses) and strives for top quality. 1.2. Employers and other stakeholders of the study programme group are involved in the study programme's development. 1.3. The study programme meets the requirements and trends in international legislation that regulate the professional field and if a professional standard exists, takes into consideration the acquisition and implementation of the knowledge and skills described therein. 3.7. Regular internal assessment is conducted in the study programme group, including the analysis and taking into account of feedback from various stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, academic staff)</p>	<p>9.1. Launching and developing of the study programme is based on the Development Plan of the higher education institution, national legislation, international trends and standards that regulate the professional field and if professional standard exists, takes into consideration the acquisition and implementation of the knowledge and skills described therein. 9.8. Study programme development is a continuous process which, among others, involves feedback from students, employers, and other relevant stakeholders. 10.1. The organisation of studies is unambiguously regulated and information thereof publicly available. In course of study management development, the results of feedback surveys and the analysis of learning activities are taken into account. 10.9. Systematic analysis of achievement of learning outcomes is performed and improvement measures are undertaken. Regular internal assessment is conducted in the study programme group, including the analysis and taking into account of feedback from various stakeholders (students, alumni, employers, academic staff)</p>

<p>ESG Part I</p>	<p>Institutional Accreditation: Guidelines for institutional accreditation See Part II Standards and guidelines for institutional accreditation</p>	<p>Initial assessment of study programme groups Guidelines for Initial and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for initial and re-assessment</p>	<p>Accreditation of study programmes (cross-border) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes See Part II Assessment areas and criteria for the accreditation of study Programmes</p>
	<p>Guidelines: In planning and developing study programmes (incl. programmes conducted in a foreign language), the HEI is guided by its objectives, its competence areas and the needs of the labour market and takes into account national strategies and the expectations of society. The study programmes are based on up-to-date sectoral know-how and research.</p>		
<p>I.10: Cyclical external quality assurance Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.</p>	<p>Clause 3: Higher education institutions have an obligation to undergo institutional accreditation at least once in seven years. The HEI may apply to undergo the institutional accreditation process in less than seven years, but no more frequently than every five years.</p>	<p>3. When applying for the right to provide instruction for the first time, HAKA shall conduct an initial assessment of the study programme group and cycle of higher education (hereinafter initial assessment). In the case the right to provide instruction has been granted for a specified term, HAKA shall, within a specified period, conduct a re-assessment of the study programme group and cycle of higher education (hereinafter re-assessment). 33. HAKA assumes that the responsibility for resolving problems pointed out in the assessment report and for continuous improvement activities lies with the higher education institution. The higher education institution shall, one year after the adoption of the assessment decision submit a written overview of its activities, planned and implemented based on recommendations in the assessment report, along with the results of such activities.</p>	<p>This standard is dependent on the legal provisions of the respective foreign country. 46.HAKA assumes that the responsibility for resolving problems pointed out in the assessment reports and for continuous improvement activities lies with the provider institution. HAKA requests that, one years after the accreditation decision was made by the Council, the provider who was granted accreditation for five years submit a written overview of its activities, planned and implemented based on recommendations in the assessment report, along with the results of such activities.</p>

Analysis

The effectiveness of the internal quality assurance is taken into account in all of the HAKA's activities. All the Guidelines address comprehensively all of ESG, Part I.

In relation of the recommendation, about Teaching and Learning (Standard 1.3), HAKA has changed the criteria for the initial assessment of study programme groups in 2020. The criterion covering this standard is the Standard 2 - Learning Teaching developed in three criteria:

- (Criterion 2.3.) The proposed learning methods motivate the learner to take responsibility for their own learning and to achieve learning outcomes.
- (Criterion 2.4.) Appropriate methods have been devised for the assessment of learning outcomes, the assessment is transparent and objective and supports the learner's development
- (Criterion 2.6.) The academic staff involved has sufficient teaching skills to encourage the learner's sense of autonomy and to provide adequate and competent guidance.

The shift from programme to institutional accreditation in the Estonian higher education system is a great challenge for HAKA and the HEIs. In this process, the focus on the strategic management and quality culture of the institutions is clear. For example, standard 8.2 indicates that "In the higher education institution, internal evaluation supports strategic management and is conducted regularly at different levels (institution, units, study programmes). The findings of internal and external evaluations are analysed, and quality improvement activities implemented." The panel considers that the focus on the effectiveness of IQA is clearly reflected in the Guidelines.

About 2017 review recommendation, HAKA no longer conducts the quality assessment of study programme groups neither at the level of first and second cycles of higher education nor at PhD level; therefore, HAKA has considered that there is no need to change the guidelines for study programme group assessment at PhD level. In the opinion of the panel, the recommendation is no longer applicable.

The panel would like to underline the new standards on academic ethics and internationalisation, which are an improvement from the last guidelines. It is important to remark that the doctoral studies are included in the institutional accreditation, and in consequence, one standard addresses Research, Development and Other Creative Activity.

Nevertheless, the fact that the number of standards has increased from 4 to 12 is still in discussion with the stakeholders. In the opinion of the universities, some of these standards are too similar and overlapping. However, in the opinion of the experts the longer report with more standards allows for better weighting and distinguishing of the outcomes.

For the initial assessment and for the accreditation of study programmes (cross-border), the approach comprehensively addresses all of ESG, Part I, as indicated in the table above.

Panel recommendation-01

Once the next cycle of institutional accreditation has been completed, HAKA should reflect on the need to have 12 standards, in the meanwhile it would be a good option to explain the focus of each standard in a more detailed way.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

New activity: Accreditation of continuing education programmes

Evidence

The Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Continuing Education (Guidelines) were approved by HAKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education on 11 April 2017 and amended on 31 March 2022 and 14 June 2022. HAKA decided to design the accreditation methodology in a way that would:

- Be in line with the ESG.
- Draw on HAKA's previous experience assessing continuing education provided by HEIs and VET providers.
- Allow for it to be used for the accreditation of different types of continuing education programmes and clusters of programmes, including micro-credentials.

The methodology is designed primarily to assess the compliance of continuing education programmes or clusters of programmes with the ESG in institutions that are not higher education institutions, but that offer programmes with intended learning outcomes related to the European Qualifications Framework for higher education (EQF levels 6, 7, 8).

Stakeholders were directly involved in the design and update of the methodology and the Guidelines for the Accreditation of Continuing Education Programmes. During the preparatory phase, consultations were held with experts from the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences as well as with experts from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

As explained in the Guidelines (section I), the purpose of accreditation of study programmes in continuing education is to determine whether: the objectives of the study programme are clear and appropriate; the teaching methods and tools used in teaching facilitate the achievement of planned learning outcomes; sufficient resources are available to implement the study programme; the studies are organised in a professional manner; the provider regularly analyses the level of achievement of the objectives of the study programme and, if necessary, plans improvement activities.

In 2022 the Guidelines were updated to ensure that a student representative is included in each review panel and to clarify the criteria for outcome.

Analysis

The panel considers that this process is well defined and fit for purpose. In the opinion of the leaders of the programme accredited, the process has ensured the aims and objectives that the Border Management Staff College had. The accreditation process has allowed the institution to improve its quality more quickly than expected thanks to the focus of the process. In this sense, the institution has asked for the re-accreditation of the programme with HAKA again.

Although there has been only one review, the agency has reviewed and updated this process before a new accreditation will be done in future.

All activities of HAKA - Recommendations from substantive changes

2017 review recommendation

There has not been any recommendation in the last review (Fully compliant).

2018 ENQA Board upgraded this suggestion to recommendation

EKKA is recommended to streamline its assessment procedures in order to eliminate duplication of activity for both the HEIs and EKKA. It is recommended that this be implemented in the next cycle of assessments. Approaches to integration of assessment types should be explored more fully.

2020 EQAR Substantive Change Report -ToR

Consider the revised criteria and procedures for institutional accreditation, the initial assessment and re-assessment of study programme groups and cross-border accreditation of study programmes.

Evidence

HAKA builds its external assessment processes on the Continuous Quality Improvement approach, meaning the cyclical nature of the processes of planning, implementation, assessment, and improvement.

Currently, the external quality assurance processes are defined by the following guidelines that are approved by Higher Education Quality Assessment Council:

- *Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation (02.02.2018; Amended on 19.05.2020; 30.06.2021; 7.01.2022; last revised in June 2022)*
- *Guidelines for Initial Assessment and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups (9.05.2020, Amended on 7.01.2022; 31.03.2022; last revised in June 2022)*
- *Guidelines for Accreditation of Study Programmes (19.05.2020; Amended on 31.03.2022; last revised in June 2022)*

Due to the changes in the national legislation and ENQA recommendations, the guidelines of HAKA have been adapted since the last review. In all cases HAKA's evaluation procedures have been developed in accordance with the legislative requirements, the strategic priorities of the Republic of Estonia and in alignment with the ESG.

HAKA organises seminars at which HEIs can reflect on the experience of assessment, share good practice with other institutions and consider the implications of assessments. HAKA uses these seminars as part of its own reflective practice. HAKA stakeholders are systematically consulted as part of the process of developing appropriate methodologies.

The agency publishes all its policies and procedures.

Analysis

The panel considers that all the processes are designed to achieve the aims and objectives of institutional accreditation or programme accreditation, always taking into account the national regulations.

All the stakeholders interviewed declared that Estonia is not a big country, and in consequence the size of the higher education system in Estonia makes it possible that the stakeholders are involved in the design and updating of new criteria.

For example, HAKA has organised a working group to develop the mandatory external QA framework for higher education, including the principles and procedures for the next cycle of institutional accreditation of higher education institutions. The aim of the development process was to decide what could be beneficial for higher education institutions in terms of making the assessments less time and resource intensive, reducing overlaps between assessments and seeking ways to make them more interconnected, while maintaining the continuity of assessment processes. The working group included all the main stakeholders of HAKA (HEIs, students, employers and the MER).

The outcome of the work was presented and discussed at the “Winds of Change” Spring Conference in May 2018. As a result of the consultations, the new EQA system proposed by HAKA was approved by the MER and adopted by the Parliament in the new Higher Education Act in 2019.

Another example to show the aim of HAKA to support the institutions to improve quality, was the introduction of new standards that were identified as problem areas in the analysis of accreditation results: internationalisation, quality culture and academic ethics.

About ENQA recommendation, HAKA no longer conducts the quality assessment of study programme groups on the first, second and third cycles of higher education after one cycle of assessments was completed. Since spring 2019, the main tool for external evaluation in higher education is institutional accreditation, which includes the assessment of some study programmes on a sampling basis during the accreditation procedure. Thus, the number of assessment types has been reduced and, where possible, different assessments have been integrated. The panel considers that HAKA has streamlined its assessment procedures.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

New activity: Accreditation of continuing education programmes

Evidence

The assessment process for the accreditation of study programmes in continuing education follows the traditional external quality assurance processes: the educational institution first prepares a self-assessment report for the study programme under assessment. A template for the self-evaluation report is provided by HAKA.

The accreditation includes an assessment visit (2 or 3 days) giving the expert panel an opportunity to interview representatives of all major stakeholders and to draw up of the assessment report on the basis of those interviews, as well as the information provided in the self-assessment report.

Point 37 of the Guidelines states that one year after issuing the certificate, HAKA asks the provider to give the HEQAC a written review of the planned and implemented activities deriving from the recommendations presented in the assessment report, as well as their results.

Different follow-up is foreseen for the scenario where the accreditation decision is adopted with the attached conditions. In these cases, the Council shall allow the provider time to rectify the deficiencies identified in the accreditation decision. The Council has the right to convene a review panel to check the fulfilment of the condition(s). If the conditions are met in a timely manner, the Council shall decide that the accreditation of the study programme for a period of five years remains in force. If the secondary condition is not met by the provider, the Council shall decide whether to establish a new secondary condition or to revoke the conditionally granted accreditation.

In the case of the OSCE College, the institution was expected to submit a written overview of the planned and implemented improvement activities. Unfortunately, the submission of the report was construed as an opportunity by the college, not as an obligation, and HAKA failed to remind the College of the need for doing it. HAKA learnt a lesson that it is necessary to remind the HEIs of their obligation to follow up on the progress made if need be.

Analysis

The panel scheduled two full meetings to hear directly from the representatives of the institution and the experts involved in the assessment of this programme. Both experts and the current managers of the institution confirmed that the process included all the phases (a self-assessment report, a site visit and a review report).

Although the institution did not submit a written follow up report, the managers of the programme declared that they had followed all the recommendations included in the report. The fact that the assessment process was voluntary, not for free and done by international experts with a great knowledge of higher education institutions in Europe, made the institution very interested in implementing all the recommendations.

In the meetings during the site visit, HAKA has firmly stated the need to claim and receive follow-up reports.

All activities of HAKA - Recommendations from substantive changes

2017 review recommendation

There has not been any recommendation in the last review (Fully compliant).

2018 ENQA Board upgraded this suggestion to recommendation

EKKA is recommended to review the balance between the assessment, feedback and implementation of recommendations, so that more attention is focused on the HEIs implementation of assessment recommendations.

2020 EQAR Substantive Change Report - ToR

Consider the revised criteria and procedures for institutional accreditation, the initial assessment and re-assessment of study programme groups and cross-border accreditation of study programmes.

Evidence

Higher education institutions must undergo institutional accreditation at least once in seven years. The Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation describes the phases of the institutional accreditation:

- HAKA shall assess the higher education institution according to twelve standards: Strategic management, Resources, Quality culture, Academic ethics, Internationalisation, Teaching staff, Study programme, Learning and teaching, Student assessment, Learning support systems, Research, development and/or other creative activity, Service to society.

- The assessment focuses on the core processes of the HEI – learning and teaching, research, development, and creative activities, and service to society – as well as on strategic management of the organisation and resource management.
- The accreditation includes assessing study programmes on a sampling basis. When defining a sampling, HAKA will take into account the number of study programmes at the HEI, the results of prior assessments of study programme groups and a justified proposal by the HEI. The sampling may comprise one to ten study programmes, depending on the number of study programme groups and programmes at the HEI. The learning and teaching process of these programmes is examined under five standards (study programme, teaching staff, learning and teaching, student assessment and learning support processes)
- The HEI shall prepare a self-evaluation report based on the guide prepared by HAKA. This self-evaluation report shall be in English.
- The assessment visit is conducted by an expert panel composed of at least four members. Including a student, at least one expert from abroad. Some reviews could arrive to 12 members, depending on the size on the institution, and two HAKA coordinators.
- The panel shall submit an assessment report to HAKA after the visit. In the report, the committee shall provide separate assessments for each of the twelve standards. HAKA shall forward it to higher education. The higher education institution shall have the opportunity to submit their comments about the assessment report. The panel shall review the comments received and consider them while preparing its final report.
- The HAKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education shall make a grounded decision on institutional accreditation at its session according to the document Rules of Procedure of the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education. The Council shall specify in its decision: the strengths of the HEI, which are achievements that exceed the level of the standard; the areas of concern and recommendations that imply non-compliances to the requirements of the standard and impact the formation of Council's decision; and opportunities for further improvement, which do not imply non-compliance to the standard or impact the formation of Council's decision.
- HAKA requests that, two years after the accreditation decision was made by the Council, the HEI who was granted accreditation for seven years submit a written overview of its activities, planned and implemented based on recommendations in the assessment report, along with the results of such activities. If the Council has added a secondary condition to the accreditation, the HEI shall submit a progress report to the Council regarding elimination of the shortcoming described in that secondary condition. The Council shall involve members of the review panel in assessing compliance with the secondary condition.

Higher education institutions shall, in order to obtain the right to provide instruction in a study programme group and cycle of higher education, follow the Guidelines for Initial Assessment and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups which describe the phases of the procedure:

- The HEI shall submit to the Ministry of Education and Research the following information about the study programmes: information about academic staff providing instruction, including their qualifications; information about financing sources for the learning, teaching and research infrastructure and similarly for conducting the studies; reasoning underpinning the need to launch studies, including data about the prospective target group as well as endorsements by professional associations and bodies.

- The Ministry of Education and Research shall assess compliance of the application with applicable regulations and shall relay the application to HAKA for assessment.
- The assessment is conducted by at least 4 members in a panel. The number of members depends on the number of study programmes and specializations within the study programme group under assessment. The assessment visit lasts for 1-3 days.
- The expert panel shall give an assessment of the study programme group and the relevant cycle of higher education in three assessment areas: quality of instruction, resources and sustainability. The assessment report contains a description of the underpinning facts, analysis thereof, and reasoning for the assessment.
- The panel shall submit an assessment report to HAKA after the visit, and HAKA shall forward it to the higher education. The higher education institution shall have the opportunity to submit their comments about the assessment report. The panel shall review the comments received and consider them while preparing its final report.
- The HAKA Quality Assessment Council shall base its decision on the assessment report, comments received from the higher education institution within a specified time, documents submitted for assessment by the higher education institution, data from the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) and Estonian Research Information System (ETIS) as well as additional materials submitted upon the request of the Assessment Council.
- The higher education institution shall, one year after the adoption of the assessment decision submit a written overview of its activities, planned and implemented based on recommendations in the assessment report, along with the results of such activities.

HAKA offers programme accreditation at Bachelor, Master and PhD-level across all disciplines, for programmes outside of Estonia. An international accreditation certifies that the individual programme complies with the ESG. The Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes outline the steps involved in the process:

- The higher education institution shall conduct self-evaluation of the study programmes under five assessment areas and prepare a self-evaluation report following the template for the self-evaluation report.
- The assessment visit is conducted by an expert panel composed of four to six members. A panel shall comprise at least two academic representatives and one student representative who is a student at the time of applying. In addition, a member from outside the higher education sector (employer representative) is involved whenever possible. The actual number of panel members depends on the number of study programmes to be accredited. The assessment visit lasts for 2-3 days.
- The panel shall submit an assessment report to HAKA after the visit, and HAKA shall forward it to the higher education institution. The higher education institution shall have the opportunity to submit their comments about the assessment report. The panel shall review the comments received and consider them while preparing its final report.
- The HAKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education shall adopt a final assessment decision on the study programme at its session according to the document Rules of Procedure of the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education.
- HAKA requests that, one year after the accreditation decision was made by the Council, the provider who was granted accreditation for five years submit a written overview of its activities,

planned and implemented based on recommendations in the assessment report, along with the results of such activities.

Analysis

Since the last review, HAKA has updated the criteria and processes of its external quality assurance processes. The main changes are in the guidelines and the focus of the processes (institutional versus program accreditation) not in the phases of the processes. That means that all the external quality assurance processes include a self-assessment report, a site visit, a report and a follow-up.

The panel has checked some reports of each process, and all of them follow in a consistent way the guidelines published. Also, the HEIs interviewed during the site visit confirmed that the processes are well-defined. All of them claim that institutional accreditation will be useful.

In relation with the recommendation, HAKA has increased the focus on follow-up activities. The institution reports within two years after the assessment on the improvement activities that have been made based on the assessment panel's recommendations and it gets feedback from the HEQAC.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

New activity: Accreditation of continuing education programmes

Evidence

Currently, point 11 of the Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Continuing Education stipulates that the review panel shall have at least four members. A panel shall comprise an employer representative, a representative of students, a training expert in the respective field of specialization and an expert in the field of quality assurance.

The Guidelines also establish the requirements for panel members and conditions for avoiding conflict of interest, the duties of panel members as well as those of the chair of the review panel. The members of a review panel shall confirm by signature the obligation to maintain the confidentiality of information that has become known to them through their membership in a review panel and the lack of conflicts of interest. The cases that can provoke a conflict of interest are detailed in the Guidelines (point 12).

All review panel members shall undergo training by HAKA focusing on the particular assessment type/assignment upon embarking on an accreditation. They are also provided with additional material to learn more about the national context and cultural components.

Analysis

The accreditation of the BSMSL program was undergone by a panel, formed by 3 international experts: 1 expert in the field of quality assurance (chair), 1 expert in academic field and 1 expert in academic and professional field.

Unfortunately, due to financial constraints on the side of the institution, the agency had not the possibility to increase the number of experts participating in the review. Because the programme was

aimed at improving professional skills, the role of the employer member was considered to be more relevant than the role of a student representative, whose participation wasn't required by the Guidelines at that time. As a result, a student representative wasn't included in the review panel in the assessment.

During the interview with these 3 experts, the panel could confirm their skills.

The panel has clearly observed that that HAKA is aware of the requirement in ESG 2.4 to include a student member in the expert panel and recognizes the importance of this practice. In this sense, the Guidelines have been amended, and currently it is compulsory to include a student representative in the review panel.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

New activity: Accreditation of continuing education programmes

Evidence

After the site visit, the report done by the review panel should determine whether the assessments areas under evaluation:

- conforms to requirements;
- partially conforms to requirements;
- does not conform to requirements.

The review panel may also give recommendations and commendations regarding an institution's performance. The final decision on a programme is adopted by the HAKA Higher Education Quality Assessment Council (Council). The Council shall base its final assessment on the assessments areas by the review panel.

If the Council is not satisfied with the analysis or conclusions in the assessment report, it can also send the report back to the review panel for clarifications.

The Council shall decide to accredit the study programme for a period of five years, not to accredit the study programme, or to accredit the study programme for five years with secondary conditions. Point 33 of the Guidelines document provides clear principles for the Council for the adoption of the accreditation decision. As explained before, the Guidelines are published on the website.

Analysis

The criteria for the accreditation decision are well defined in the Guidelines and published on the website.

The assessment report of BSMSL programme determines the decision of each assessment area, these decisions are well analysed. Similarly, the final assessment decision was taken by the HAKA Quality

Assessment Council following the criteria defined in the Guidelines. The panel observed that the criteria were well applied in the accreditation under review.

All activities of HAKA - Recommendations from substantive changes

2017 review recommendation

There has not been any recommendation in the last review (Fully compliant).

2020 EQAR Substantive Change Report - ToR

Consider the revised criteria and procedures for institutional accreditation, the initial assessment and re-assessment of study programme groups and cross-border accreditation of study programmes.

Evidence

All assessment criteria for all its activity related to higher education are published on the HAKA's website. All the guidelines have a section named "Decision by the HAKA Quality Assessment Council" where the principles of how the Council bases its decision are explained.

The Council bases its decision on the self-evaluation report of the HEI, the assessments by the committee, comments by the HEI received in a timely manner and on additional materials submitted by HEI upon request of the Council. In case of contradictions in assessments or inadequate justification, the Council shall have the right to return the report to the review panel to be reviewed and clarified. The committee shall resend the reviewed report to HAKA.

Since the last review, the Council has adopted 94 assessment decisions in total: 59 decisions for the quality assessment of study programme groups, 17 institutional accreditation decisions and 18 decisions of initial and re-assessment of study programme groups. The details of the outcomes in all procedures are highlighted in this table included in the SAR:

QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMME GROUPS 2018 – MAY 2022				
Assessment decision by the HEQAC	7 years	7 years with conditions	3 years	
Number of HEI SPGs	43	11	5	
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION 2018 – MAY 2022				
Accreditation decision by the HEQAC	7 years	7 years with conditions	3 years	No accreditation
Number of HEIs	6	5	6	2
INITIAL AND RE-ASSESSMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMME GROUPS 2018 – MAY 2022				
Assessment decision by the HEQAC	Right for an unspecified term		Right for a fixed term (3 years)	
Number of HEI SPGs	8		10	

All the institutions that participated in the site visit knew why, for example, they might get a condition attached to a decision and the difference between this and a specified period of approval for three or seven years.

Analysis

The panel considers that HAKA has transparent, published criteria in place for all types of assessments, and these are applied consistently. In this sense, the revision of the criteria and procedures for institutional accreditation, the initial assessment and re-assessment of study programme groups and cross-border accreditation of study programmes has not affected the manner in which the criteria are applied by the Council.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

New activity: Accreditation of continuing education programmes

Evidence

The production of the assessment report is described in the Guidelines:

- The panel should produce the first draft of the assessment report no later than four weeks after the assessment visit.
- The provider under evaluation has the right to provide comments to the draft assessment report within two weeks of receiving the draft report.
- The panel shall analyse the comments submitted by the provider and formalise the final report within one week of receiving the comments. It is recommended that assessments areas shall be adopted by consensus. If consensus is not reached, the decision shall be made by simple majority of members of the panel and the dissenting view(s) together with the reasons shall be included.

All assessment reports and accreditation decisions adopted by the assessment councils are published on the HAKA's website in the sections designated for the respective assessment type.

Assessment reports for the assessment of fulfilment of secondary conditions along with the respective decision adopted by HEQAC would also be published on the HAKA website. However, as HAKA has only conducted one accreditation of a continuing education programme to date and no conditionalities were imposed on the outcome, no examples can be given.

The assessment report should include an analysis of information gathered under five assessment areas: study programme and study programme development, learning and teaching, teaching staff, participants and resources.

The assessment report also provides the opportunity for the review panel to give some recommendations that fall outside the assessment criteria.

Analysis

The BSMSL assessment report is clearly divided into several parts:

- Main facts of the accreditation.

- The analysis and assessment of each assessment area (study programme and study programme development, learning and teaching, teaching staff, participants and resource).
- Commendations and recommendations.

The accreditation decision report includes the strengths and the areas of improvement and recommendations of the five assessment areas, as well as the final decision. The report also mentions the need that the Border Management Staff College should submit an action plan to HAKA with regard to the areas of improvement pointed out in the report a year later, as well as the possibility of appealing the decision.

Both the review report and the decision report are published together on the HAKA website.

The panel considers the report and the decisions clear, complete, and accessible.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

New activity: Accreditation of continuing education programmes

Evidence

The Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Continuing Education includes in section VIII the Contestation of assessment proceedings conducted by HAKA and final assessments by the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council (Council).

HAKA gives the possibility that higher education institutions may file a challenge (complaint or appeal) pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Procedure Act. The appeals procedure is explained on the website, in the Guidelines (Chapter VIII) and in the decision report. It says:

“The Council shall forward the challenge to its Appeals Committee who shall provide an unbiased opinion in writing regarding the validity of the challenge to the Council, within five days after receipt of the challenge. The Council shall resolve the challenge within ten days of its receipt, taking into account the reasoned opinion of the Appeals Committee. If the challenge needs to be investigated further, the deadline for its review by the Council may be extended by a maximum of thirty days. The decision by the Council may be challenged within thirty days after the delivery of the final decision, filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court.”

The Appeals Committee is a consultative body which presents its independent opinion to the HAKA Higher Education Quality Assessment Council on the justification of the appeal submitted on the proceedings or opinions of the Council. The Council is the body that takes final decision.

The Appeals Committee is appointed for a term of three years and consists of four members and alternates. The Committee is convened on the basis of need. The constitution of the Committee is regulated in the document Procedure for formation of Estonian Higher Education Quality Assessment Council and the Appeals Committee that is available on website.

OSCE BSMSL programme managers have not presented an appeal.

Analysis

HAKA has established a common appeals and complaints procedure for all types of reviews and has defined the same procedure for complains and appeals.

Chapter 5 “Challenge proceedings” of the Estonian Administrative Procedure Act describes the procedure for appealing the decision. Although, the panel understand that it is possible to appeal the procedure (delay, omission, refusal to remove an official, return of an application for issue of the administrative act, other acts provided by law). The agency should make a clearer distinction between an appeal and a complaint that could be done from a stakeholder that has not been involved in the review.

Analysing the procedure, the panels would like to suggest giving more independence to the Appeals Committee. Currently, the Appeals Committee is a consultative body. That means that the decision from the Appeals Committee is not binding on the Council. The panel believes that the appeals should not only be considered, but also decided by another body than the one whose decision/report is appealed.

During the site visit the panel learned that both higher education institutions and, in this particular case, the OSCE College, know the procedure to appeal.

HAKA has received 2 appeals, in 2018 and 2022. The number of appeals received in low. The reason given by the universities is that it has not been necessary, as some disagreements have been resolved by the coordinator

Panel suggestions for further improvement - 02

The panel would suggest giving more independence to the Appeals Committee. That means that the decision from the Appeals Committee should be binding on the Council.

Panel suggestions for further improvement - 03

The panel would suggest that the agency establish a clearer distinction between appeals and complaints procedures.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ENHANCEMENT AREAS

ESG 3.4

One of HAKA's functions is to analyse the results of quality assessments and to conduct thematic analyses, as well as to disseminate best quality assurance practices.

From the reading of the documents available (HAKA Quality Handbook and the Guidelines for Thematic Review), as well as, from the interviews conducted during the site visit, the panel evidenced that HAKA's thematic analyses are clearly defined, including principles, processes, target groups and types of thematic analyses.

The principles of thematic analysis are set out in the HAKA Quality Handbook, these are:

- To highlight developments, trends, best practices, and problem areas in the education system at large.
- To prepare educational policy decisions and measures or to evaluate the impact and implementation of these decisions and measures.
- To provide feedback to educational institutions on the outcome of their QA activities.
- To receive input on the relevance of principles, procedures and criteria for quality assessments and make suggestions for improvements.

HAKA has identified the following target groups for thematic analysis as illustrated in the SAR:



One type of thematic analyses is **the analyses of assessment periods**, in which HAKA regularly compiles analytical summaries of its assessment results. In this case, the process is the following:

- HAKA collects feedback from participants of assessment interviews and institutions undergoing assessment through feedback seminars that are conducted after the institutional accreditation decision has been taken.
- This feedback is analysed and used as input in detecting areas for improvement in assessment procedures as well as in the selection of assessment experts.

The analyses of assessment periods include periodical summaries of assessment results. Under this category, it is possible to find mainly annual reports named “Overview educational system about external assessment” published by the Ministry of Education and Research, External Evaluation Department. In these publications HAKA contributes some articles about the evaluation of higher education.

Since the last review, HAKA has published the following reports on its website:

- The Implementation, Outcomes and Lessons Learned from Institutional Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions 2019-2020.
- Overview of the external evaluation of the education system in the 2017/2018 – One chapter that speaks about the results of the evaluation of higher education.

Although the agency summarises these overviews periodically, in this case it seems that the main emphasis in these overviews is data gathering or summarizing the activity done by HAKA. The panel considers that HAKA has more information and data to analyse about institutional accreditation and programme accreditation. So, HAKA could produce reports intended exclusively for higher education institutions, with more reflection on the findings.

Also, the panel suggests that the presentations and the outcomes of the feedback seminars would be published on the website as a way to share information.

Another type of thematic analysis is the **needs-based thematic analyses**.

As explained in the SAR, these thematic analyses have several goals: to focus on a specific topic, to do analyses that serve as a basis of strategic planning and policy-making in external QA, to do analyses that come from the participations in international cooperation and development projects.

Under this category the panel would like to underline different types:

Peer-reviewed research publications: these are analyses that are published as research articles, master’s thesis, PhD thesis or other. For example, an analysis conducted as a part of a PhD studies that focuses on the issues with Information overload, *Information cultures and strategies for coping with information overload: case of Estonian higher education institutions* published in the Journal of Documentation (2021).

In this case, the panel considers it a good practice that HAKA promotes the master’s and PhD thesis among their staff. On the one hand, to pursue a third cycle study increases the skills and knowledge of the staff. On the other hand, the fact to have peer-reviewed research publications assures the quality of the analysis and the dissemination of the report. However, a research article must follow the publication rules of the scientific journal, often resulting in closed access. In this case the agency should find a way to have open access to the report or article.

Analyses with a defined topic based on the needs of stakeholders or analysis of assessment periods.

For example, “How did higher education institutions cope with the forced distance learning from March to June 2020?”- an analysis of forced distance learning that emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this type of analysis, the Director of HAKA approves the topic and the person or the team (experts from outside HAKA can be involved) responsible for carrying out the analysis. For each analysis, critical readers will be assigned from within HAKA, who will provide recommendations to complement the analysis. Once an analysis is complete, its outcomes are presented first within HAKA and then to the main target groups of the analysis.

The high workload of the staff implies some difficulties in carrying out thematic analyses. One solution proposed by HAKA is to involve more external experts. HAKA is debating whether it is worth outsourcing the thematic analysis. From the point of view of the panel, the best solution would be to create teams composed of external experts in the field of the analysis, coordinated by HAKA staff, in order to guide the process and not to lose the knowledge of the process. In this case, the dissemination of the results inside the agency and outside, thorough seminars or forums, would be a key element.

Analyses and reports for international cooperation and development projects

In this category the agency includes final reports of the projects or the outcomes of international projects, for example: *Proposal for the development of the external quality assurance system of higher education in the Republic of Tajikistan in line with European standards (2021)*.

In this case the report can be divided in two parts. One part where HAKA describes the process and results of accreditation done in Tajikistan. In the opinion of the panel this part could not be considered thematic analysis. A second part, named *Analysis of the results of piloting institutional accreditation and recommendations for improvement*, where HAKA analyses what worked well and what did not work well in each phase of the process and summarises best practices and recommendations that can be considered thematic analysis as it could be useful for other higher education institutions.

And finally, Thematic reviews, which is quite an important category as it is a function described in the Higher Education Act (2019). Thematic reviews are part of the higher education external assessment system, aimed at providing input to the Ministry of Education and Research for preparing higher education policy decisions and measures or assessing the impact and implementation thereof as well as providing feedback for higher education institutions.

Although the themes and participating institutions are approved by the Minister of Education and Research, the topics are proposed by HAKA with the participation of universities and other stakeholders.

During the interviews with the Ministry, universities and HAKA the panel learned that they consider a thematic review a project where all the stakeholders analyse a topic in order to propose suggestions for legislation changes, or to get evidence for political decisions, to support higher education institutions. In any case, thematic reviews are considered evaluations with no legal consequences.

For example, the “Learning and Teaching of International Students in Estonian Higher Education Institutions (2019)” thematic review was found very useful and interesting by the universities.

The methodology included the analysis of several incomes:

- Questionnaire-based self-analyses by HEIs.
- Results of earlier studies and analyses.
- Background information from the Ministry of Education and Research.
- Interviews with the heads of the HEIs, representatives of support structures, heads of study programmes, teaching staff and students.
- Interviews with representatives of practical training providers.

The panel considers that this is a good example of thematic analysis, for two reasons: the involvement of all stakeholders in the analysis and the selections of the topics covered in the analysis based on the needs of the higher education system in Estonia.

Finally, the last activity that the HAKA performs is the dissemination of thematic analyses. HAKA uses different tools:

Publication on the HAKA website

The analyses are published on the website under the section Analyses, articles, presentations.

Most of the reports are published in Estonian, which is normal. Nevertheless, the panel considers that the translation of reports that might be interesting for the agencies or universities outside of Estonia would be a good practice.

Presentations in forums:

Another way to disseminate the results by HAKA is to organise seminars. The seminars have two target groups:

1) Stakeholders that have participated in the thematic review, and 2) stakeholders that have not participated in the thematic review, but the conclusions will be useful for them.

HAKA organises these seminars periodically. Although the agency needs human and financial resources to organise this type of activity, the panel suggests to organise a seminar once a year. This would allow the agency not only to spread the results, but also to gather the necessary feedback and improve the whole process.

Social media

HAKA is exploring other ways to disseminate the results. Social media, like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn are excellent channels to reach the stakeholders, including students. This is considered a good practice and, as such, should be continued in the future.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

RESEARCH

During the visit, the evaluation of the research was discussed in different meetings.

An aspect to consider is the role of HAKA and the role of the Estonian Research Council, although both entities have different functions, some assessments would have some overlaps.

Although HAKA no longer conducts quality assessment of study programme groups at the doctoral level,

HAKA has a criterion Research, Development and/or Other Creative Activity (RDC) in the Institutional Accreditation; also, PhD programs are taken as a sample programme.

The Research Council also evaluates the research; although the focus is different, there could be some connections.

Currently there is a working group dealing with the Organisation of Research and Development Act

The role of HAKA in this process should be relevant in order to assure the quality of master's and PhD programmes. In this sense, the Estonian Research Council, the Ministry of Education and Research and HAKA should cooperate as much as needed to avoid duplicating certain assessments. However, PhD programs depend heavily on targeted research funding, which is a separate process.

CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

01- Once the next cycle of Institutional Accreditation has been completed, HAKA should reflect on the need of 12 standards, in the meanwhile it would be a good option to explain in a document the focus of each standard in a more detailed way. (ESG 2.1)

In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, HAKA is in compliance with the ESG.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT

- 01- The panel suggests including the detailed procedure for the selection and dismissal of the director in the Quality Handbook and in a procedure approved by the Supervisory Board. (ESG 3.3)
- 02- The panel would suggest giving more independence to the Appeals Committee. That means that the decision from the Appeals Committee should be binding for the Council. (ESG 2.7)
- 03- The panel would suggest that the agency establish a clearer distinction between appeals and complaints procedures. (ESG 2.7)

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
14.09.2022 - Online meeting with the agency's resource person			
	120 min	Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for site visit	
	90 min On Zoom	An online clarifications meeting with the agency's resource person to clarify the agency's changes since the last full review against the ESG and to understand the background and motive of the agency's choice of the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (next to the overall HE and QA context of the agency)	Director Assessment coordinator and HAKA coordinator of the Agency Review
18.09.2022 – Day 0 (pre-visit) - Sunday			
0.1	90 min 16.30-18.00	Review panel's pre-visit meeting and preparations for day 1	
19.09.2022 – Day 1-Monday			
	15 min 8.30 – 8.45	Preparation	
1.1	45 min 8.45 – 9.30	Meeting with the Supervisory Board	Chair of the Supervisory Board (nominated by the Rectors' Conference of Universities of Applied Science), Member (nominated by the Ministry of Education and Research),

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
			Member (nominated by the Universities' Rectors' Conference), Member (nominated by Estonian Employers' Confederation), Student (nominated by Federation of Estonian Student Unions)
	10 min	Review panel's private discussion	
I.2	45 min 09.40 – 10.25	Meeting with the Director	Director
I.3	45 min 10.30 - 11.15	Meeting with members of Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education	Members of HEQAC including chair and student members
	10 min	Review panel's private discussion	
I.4	45 min 11.25-12.10	Meeting with the agency staff about SAR and SWOT	Assessment coordinators Information Manager, Assessment Director for VET
I.5	30 min 12.15 - 12.45 Hybrid	Meeting with key staff of the agency/staff in charge of Accreditation of continuing education programmes (Note: 30 min, because HAKA has done only one evaluation)	Assessment Director, Director for Development, Former EKKA employee, coordinator of the Accreditation*on Zoom
	55 min	Lunch (panel only)	
I.6	30 min 13.40 - 14.10	Meeting with the experts in charge of Accreditation of continuing education programmes	Panel member from academia, Panel member representing academia and employers

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
	On Zoom		
1.7	30 min 14.15 - 14.45- On Zoom	Meeting with the institution - Accreditation of continuing education programmes	Chief of Training and Education, OSCE Border Management Staff College; National Training Officer, OSCE Border Management Staff College
	20 min 14,50 - 15.10	Review panel's private discussion	
1.8	45 min 15.15-16.00	Meeting with key body of the agency	Assessment Director; Assessment Director for Higher Education; Secretary of the Supervisory Board, Information Manager; Assessment coordinator, internal quality coordinator
1.9	45 min 16.05 – 16.50	Meeting with stakeholders, such as employers, students, local community	Former Head of the Culture Committee at the Parliament, Chair of the Higher Education Support Group at the Parliament and one of the authors of the Development Plan for Estonian education 2021-2035; Member of the Federation of Estonian Students' Union. Analyst, Estonian Qualifications Authority; Member of the Board, Estonian Research Council; Advisor to the Estonian Information Technology Association
	16.50-17.50 60 min	Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day 2	

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
20.09.2022 – Day 2 – Tuesday			
	30 min 8.30 - 9.00	Review panel's private meeting	
2.1	45 min 9.00 - 9.45 Hybrid	Meeting with ministry representatives	Secretary General; Head of the Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training Policy and Lifelong Learning Department
	10 min	Review panel's private discussion	
2.2	45 min 10.00 - 10.45 Hybrid(*On Zoom)	Meeting with heads of HEIs/ HEI representatives reviewed	Rector of Taltech; Rector of Estonian Aviation Academy*; Rector of Tallinn Health Care College*; Vice Rector of Estonian University of Life Sciences; Vice Rector of Estonian Business School *
	15 min 10.45 - 11.00	Review panel's private discussion	
2.3	45 min 11.05 - 11.50	Meeting with staff of the agency who has written or participated in the elaboration of thematic analysis	Director for Development; Assessment Director; Assessment Director for Continuing Education; Assessment coordinator
2.4	45 min 12.00-12.45 On Zoom	Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool	Student member of Tallinn University of Technology IA panel 2021, Estonian Business School 2020, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences 2019 Panel member of Tallinn University of Technology IA panel 2021

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
			Chair of the Panel, TTK University of Applied Sciences IA in 2021 Panel secretary of TTK University of Applied Sciences IA 2021 Panel member of Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary IA 2021 Student member of Estonian University of Life Sciences IA panel 2022; Tallinn University 2021
	45+20 min 12.45 - 13.50	Lunch (panel only) Review panel's private discussion	
2.5	45 min 14.00 - 14.45 Hybrid(*On Zoom)	Meeting with heads of HEIs/ HEI representatives and quality assurance officers of HEIs	Vice rector of University of Tartu*; Director of the Baltic Media, Film and Arts School of Tallinn University; Head of Administrations, EBS Helsinki; Head of Registry and Student Affairs Department, Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre*; Educationalist-analyst at Estonian Academy of Security Sciences*
	60 min 14.50 – 15.50	Review panel's private discussion	
2.7	30 min 16.00 – 16.30 On Zoom	Meeting with experts that have participated in Cross-border assessments	Panel Member - TNU; Panel Member - TNU; Panel Member- TNU and Haybusak

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
2.8	45 min 16.45 – 17. 30 On Zoom	Meeting with HEI's involved in Cross-border assessments – with interpretation	Representatives from Yerevan Haybusak University: - Director of the YHU Institute of Medicine; Deputy Director of the YHU Institute of Medicine Responsible for international students; Vice-rector for Development and Quality Assurance
2.9	30 min 17.30 -18.00	Meeting with Director (or staff) to clarify any pending issues	Director
	60 min 18.00 – 19.00	Wrap-up meeting among panel members: preparation for day 3 and provisional conclusions. Meeting among panel members to agree on final issues to clarify	
21.09.2022 – Day 3 – Wednesday			
3.1	60 min 8.30-09.30	Meeting with Director (or staff) to clarify any pending issues	Director Assessment coordinator and HAKA coordinator of the Agency Review
	120 min 09.30 -11.00	Private meeting between panel members to agree on the main findings	
3.2	30 min 11.00 -11.30	Final de-briefing meeting with staff and Board members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings	All HAKA staff

ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

Targeted review of Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) against the ESG

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The present Terms of Reference were agreed between EKKA (applicant), ENQA (coordinator) and EQAR.

1. Background

Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education-EKKA has been registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since 2013 and is applying for renewal of EQAR registration based on a targeted external review against *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* coordinated by - The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education-EKKA has been a member of ENQA since 2013 and is applying for renewal of ENQA membership.

EKKA is carrying out the following activities⁴ within the scope of the ESG:

- Institutional Accreditation
- Initial and re-assessment of study programme groups
- Accreditation of study programmes⁵
- Accreditation of continuing education programmes

All these activities will be included on the agency's profile on the EQAR website and linked to DEQAR database. NB: The agency may not upload reports from other activities to DEQAR.

The following activities of the applicant are outside the scope of the ESG:

- Initial assessment of study programme groups in VET
- Quality assessment of study programme groups in VET

⁴ The activity "Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups" will be discontinued by the time of the self-evaluation report. The external review could evaluate the work of the agency performed following this activity upon agreement between the coordinator and the agency; the agency may find the feedback beneficial for the development of current and future processes

⁵ Including programmes offered both at institutions at home and abroad

- International development projects
- A pilot project for developing a quality assurance model for continuing education
- A pilot project for developing a quality assurance model for general education

These activities are not relevant to the application for renewal on EQAR.

2. Purpose and scope of the targeted review

This review will evaluate the extent to which EKKA continues to fulfil the requirements of the ESG. The targeted review aims to place more focus on those parts that require attention and provide sufficient information to support EKKA's application to EQAR.

The review will be further used as part of the agency's renewal of membership in ENQA.

2.1 Focus areas

A) Standards with a partial compliance conclusion in the Register Committee's last renewal decision:

a. Does not apply

B) Standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the following activities:

a. Accreditation of continuing education programmes

a.i. Attention should be paid to ESG 2.1, in regards to the coverage of ESG Part 1. The current requirements pay little attention the requirement of ESG 1.9 for periodic reviews of the study programmes. The review should also look into the practical implementation of the standards in the report(s) produced under this activity.

a.ii. Attention should be paid to ESG 2.2, in regards to the fitness for purpose of the evaluation methodology in broader set of study fields. Current requirements were designed for the evaluation of specific programme.

a.iii. A particular attention should be paid to ESG 2.4, in regards to the involvement of students in review panels. The current wording in the guidelines of the activity does not ensure the regular involvement of students in the review. In the one procedure implemented so far, the review panel did not involve such a member. The review should indicate whether this has been assured for future review.

C) Standards affected by other types of substantive changes:

a. Standards ESG 2.2, ESG 2.3 and ESG 2.5: Considering the revised criteria and procedures for institutional accreditation, the initial

assessment and re-assessment of study programme groups and cross-border accreditation of study programmes.

- b. Standards ESG 3.1 and ESG 3.3: The review should in particular consider how EKKA's director and the members of its assessment council are selected and appointed, what are the rules for dismissing its members, how the agency ensures its independence in its external assessments considering its close structural and operational interlink with the Ministry of Education and Research.

D) ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance;

E) Selected enhancement area: ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis

F) Other matters regarding ESG compliance that come up during the targeted review and that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG (if any).

These issues should be investigated by the review panel as far as possible, providing an analysis and conclusion on the ESG standard(s) concerned.

3. The review process

The review will be conducted in line with the requirements of *the EQAR Procedures for Applications* and *the Policy on Targeted Reviews*, and following the methodology described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Agreement on the Terms of Reference between EQAR, EKKA and The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA);
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel by The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA);
- Self-assessment by EKKA including the preparation and publication of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to EKKA;
- Preparation and completion of the final review report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final review report by ENQA's Agency Review Committee;
- Analysis of the final review report and decision-making by the EQAR Register Committee;
- Decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board.

3.1 Independence of the review coordinator

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) has not provided remunerated (e.g. consultancy) or unremunerated services to EKKA during the past 5 years, and conversely EKKA has not provided any remunerated or

unremunerated services to The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

3.2 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of at least 3 members including an academic employed by a higher education institution, a student member and one other expert. At least one of the three members is from another country.

The third panel member should be a quality assurance professional that is currently employed by a QA agency and has been engaged in quality assurance within the past five years. When requested by the agency under review or when considered particularly pertinent, a second quality assurance professional or other stakeholders (for example, a representative of the labour market) may be included in addition to the three panel members. In this case, an additional fee is charged to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses.

One of the members serves as the chair of the review panel, and one as the review secretary. At least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. At least two panel members come from outside the national system of the agency under review (if relevant).

The panel will be supported by the ENQA Review Coordinator (an ENQA staff member) who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA's requirements are met throughout the process. The Review Coordinator will not be the secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide the agency with the proposed panel composition and the curricula vitae of the panel members to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The reviewers will have to agree to a non-conflict of interest statement that is incorporated in their contract for the review of this agency.

Once appointed, The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) will inform EQAR about the appointed panel members.

3.3 Self-assessment by EKKA, including the preparation of a self-assessment report

EKKA is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;

The self-assessment report is expected to contain:

- a description of the self-assessment process and the production of the SAR;
- a description of changes occurred within the agency since the last full review, including any eventual changes in the higher education system and quality assurance system in which the agency predominantly operates, the agency's structure, funding, its list of external quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG, as well as the changes in the agency's quality assurance activities abroad (where relevant);
- a section that addresses the focus areas of the review, including standards that were considered to be partially compliant with the ESG in the last full review as well as ESG 2.1 and one self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (see 2.1 Focus areas);
- a SWOT analysis of the agency as a whole;
- for each of the individual standards enlisted above (see section 2) a consideration of how the agency has addressed the recommendations as noted in the previous EQAR Register Committee decision of inclusion/renewal (if applicable).

The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which EKKKA fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and continues to meet the ESG and thus the requirements for EQAR registration.

The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat, which has two weeks to carry out a screening. The purpose of a screening is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but rather whether or not the necessary information, as outlined in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*, is present. If the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to ask for a revised version within two weeks.

The final version of the agency's self-assessment report is then submitted to the review panel a minimum of eight weeks prior to the site visit. The agency publishes the completed SAR on its website and sends the link to ENQA. ENQA will publish this link on its website as well.

3.4 A site visit by the review panel

The review panel will draft a proposal of the site visit schedule considering the aspects included under the focus area (as defined under point 2.1 of the Terms of Reference).

The schedule will include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit. The approved schedule shall be given to EKKA at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The site visit should enable the review panel to explore how the agency has addressed the standards where it has been found to be partially compliant (if the case), aspects of substantive change, consideration of internal quality assurance (ESG 2.1) and the self-selected ESG standard(s) for enhancement. The panel will include extra time during the site-visit to address any other arising issues (if the case) that might have an impact on the agency's compliance with the ESG.

The site visit will close with a final de-briefing meeting outlining the panel's overall impressions but not its judgement on the ESG compliance of the agency.

Prior to the physical site visit, the panel attends a joint briefing call between the panel, The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and EQAR to clarify the review expectations and address any possible arising matters.

In advance of the site visit (at least two weeks before the site visit), the panel will organise an obligatory online meeting with the agency. This meeting is held to ensure that the panel reaches a sufficient understanding of:

- The specific national/legal context in which the agency operates;
- The specific quality assurance system to which the agency belongs;
- The key characteristics of the agency's external QA activities.

3.5 Preparation and completion of the final review report

The review report will be drafted in consultation with all review panel members and correspond to the purpose and scope of the review as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. In particular, it will provide a clear rationale for its findings concerning each ESG. When preparing the report, the review panel should bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG* to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR⁶.

The external report will present the facts and analysis reflecting the reality at the time of review. This will form the main basis for the Register Committee's decision making.

A draft will first be submitted to the ENQA Review Coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity, and language. After panel has considered coordinator's feedback, the report will go to the agency for comment on factual accuracy. If EKKA chooses to provide a position statement in reference to the draft

⁶ See here: <https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/UseAndInterpretationOfTheESGv2.0-2015.pdf>

report, it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report.

Thereafter, the review panel will take into account the statement by EKKA and submit the document for scrutiny to ENQA's Agency Review Committee and then to EQAR along with the remaining application documents (self-evaluation report, Declaration of Honour, statement to review report-if applicable). The report is to be finalised normally within 2-4 months of the site visit and will normally not exceed 30 pages in length. All panel will sign off on the final version of the external review report. The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) will provide to EKKA the [Declaration of Honour](#) together with the final report.

4. Publication and use of the report

EKKA will receive the expert panel's report and publish it on its website once the ENQA Agency Review Committee has validated the report. Prior to the final validation of the report, the ENQA Agency Review Committee may request additional (documentary) evidence or clarification from the review panel, review coordinator or the agency if needed. The review report will be published on ENQA website regardless of the review outcome. The report will also be published on the EQAR website together with the decision on registration, regardless of the outcome.

ENQA will retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the review panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, will be vested in ENQA. In the case of an unsuccessful application to EQAR, the report may also be used by the ENQA Board to reach a conclusion on whether the agency can be admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA.

5. Decision-making on EQAR registration and ENQA membership

The agency will submit the review report via email to EQAR before expiry of the agency's registration on EQAR. The agency will also include its self-assessment report (in a PDF format), the Declaration of Honour and any other relevant documents to the application to EQAR (i.e. annexes, statement to the review report).

EQAR is expected to consider the review report and the agency's application at its Register Committee meeting in June 2023. The Register Committee's final judgement on the agency's compliance with the ESG as a whole can either be substantially compliant (approval of the application) or not substantially compliant (rejection of the application). In case of a positive decision (substantially compliant with the ESG), the registration is renewed for a further five years (from the date of the review report).

The decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board will take place after EQAR Register Committee decision.

To apply for ENQA membership, the agency is requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation for applying for membership and the ways in which the agency expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be considered by the Board together with the confirmation of EQAR listing when deciding on the agency's membership. Should the agency not be granted the registration in EQAR or the registration is not renewed, the decision on ENQA membership will be taken based on the final review report, the application letter, and the statement from the Agency Review Committee. The decision on membership will be published on ENQA's website.

6. Indicative schedule of the review

Agreement on Terms of Reference	December 2021
Appointment of review panel members	March 2022
Self-assessment report (SAR) completed by EKKA	13 May 2022
Screening of SAR by ENQA Review Coordinator	May 2022
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	June/July 2022
Briefing of review panel members	July 2022
Review panel site visit	Second half of September 2022
Submission of the draft review report to ENQA Review Coordinator	October 2022
Factual check of the review report by the EKKA	November 2022
Statement of EKKA to review panel (if applicable)	December 2022
Submission of review report to The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)	December 2022
Validation of the review report by the Agency Review Committee	February 2023
EQAR Register Committee meeting and decision on the application by EKKA	June 2023
Decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board	September 2023

ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	<i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015</i>
HAKA	Estonian Quality Agency for Education (Eesti Hariduse Kvaliteediagentuur)
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
HEQAC	Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education
QA	quality assurance
SAR	self-assessment report

ANNEX 4: DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY HAKA LEGISLATION

- Higher Education Act
- Standard of Higher Education (in Estonian)
- Administrative Procedure Act
- Code of Administrative Court Procedure

DOCUMENTS REGULATING HAKA'S ACTIVITIES

- Statutes of the Education and Youth Board
- HAKA Development Plan 2017–2022
- Interim Development Plan Progress Report (in Estonian)
- Procedure for the formation of the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education and the Appeals Committee

ASSESSMENT RELATED GUIDELINES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation
- Guidelines for Initial Assessment and Re-assessment of Study Programme Groups
- Guidelines for Thematic Review
- Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes (cross-border assessments)
- Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Continuing Education
- Self-Evaluation Report for Institutional Accreditation

INTERNAL GUIDELINES

- Quality Handbook
- Higher Education Coordinator's Handbook

QUICK LINKS TO RELEVANT INFORMATION ON THE HAKA WEBSITE:

- Assessment committees: IA; Initial and re-assessment of study programme groups; Accreditation of continuing education study programmes; Accreditation of study programmes
- Assessment decisions: IA; Initial and re-assessment of study programme groups; Accreditation of continuing education study programmes; Accreditation of study programmes
- The Higher Education Assessment Council, minutes of the HEQAC meetings (in Estonian)

- The Supervisory Board, minutes of the Supervisory Board meetings (in Estonian)
- Thematic analyses (Analyses, Publications and Presentations)
- Minutes of the Meetings (in Estonian)

OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL

Website

ENQA TARGETED REVIEW 2023

THIS REPORT presents findings of the ENQA Targeted Review of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA), undertaken in 2022.

enqa.

European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education