



**Follow-up Report on the implementation of the
recommendations in the areas of development, made by ENQA,
in June 2015, regarding the full membership of HQA in ENQA**

Athens, June 2017



❖ AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 1

(ESG 2.3 Criteria for Decisions - ENQA Criterion 1 cont.)

ENQA Panel Recommendation: That HQA continue its work designed to further strengthen its arrangements for ensuring consistency of reporting.

ENQA Board Recommendation: Substantial compliance was reported whereas, from the panel's report, the agency fulfills the criterion. Therefore, the Board regards this criterion as fully met and supports the panel's recommendation to "further strengthen its arrangements for ensuring consistency of reporting".

HQA follow-up: As pointed out by the ENQA Panel, and in accordance with the ESG 2.3, special attention has been paid to the consistency of reporting and the uniformity of the applied criteria for decisions. In particular, the template for the external evaluation of the HEIs (implemented during October 2015 - June 2016) incorporated a four-step value scale (rating: worthy of merit/ positive/partially positive/negative) expanding at 27 aspects of review. Moreover, the draft Reports that the panels submitted to HQA were thoroughly checked against any oversight errors in order to achieve maximum consistency throughout the whole procedure. Furthermore, HQA is currently at the last stage of the preparatory work for the Accreditation of the study programmes and the internal quality assurance systems of the HEIs of the Country. The new Accreditation Guide for the experts includes a series of benchmarks, with specific sub-benchmarks for each scientific field. Hence, this practice has been established and will be in force for all future activities.

❖ AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 2

(ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose - ENQA Criterion 1 cont.)

ENQA Panel Recommendation: That HQA continue to explore alternative mechanisms for ensuring a stronger student voice in its external review procedures and for the inclusion of a larger number of experts from outside the Greek speaking communities.

HQA follow-up: As regards the requirement for the enhancement of student participation, HQA is working towards the amendment of the legislation so as to allow for student participation in the external review panels.

Also, to align with the second Panel recommendation, HQA is aiming at the recruitment of international experts, beyond the greek-speaking community. To this end, an electronic platform with public access has been developed and is going to be launched shortly, as part of the new MIS. This platform constitutes the interface of the HQA Registry where interested scientists and stakeholders can apply for enrolment. A relevant call for enrolment is planned to be advertised through the web-sites of Quality Assurance Agencies which are members of ENQA.

❖ AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 3

(ESG 2.6 Follow-up procedures - ENQA Criterion 1 cont.)

ENQA Panel Recommendation: That the responsible Greek bodies consider whether full responsibility for consideration of follow-up reports should rest more directly with HQA as part of a more structured and transparent follow-up process.

ENQA Board Recommendation: Regarding this standard, the Board's judgement differs from that on the panel. The Board noted a discrepancy between the conclusion of the review panel and the evidence brought forward in the report. Substantial compliance was reported whereas there are no direct follow-up procedures and there is no provision presented for action on any negative findings. Therefore, the Board regards this criterion as partially met. HQA is urged to work for a direct, structured and transparent follow-up process.

HQA follow-up: In response to the above recommendation and also as part of a predefined aim, a follow-up procedure has already been put in place for the external evaluation of the HEIs, which was carried out in the period October 2015-June 2016. In addition, in view of the upcoming accreditation of both study programmes and internal quality assurance systems, a follow-up plan has been drafted and will constitute an integral part of the procedure. The follow-up includes an action-plan template provided by HQA and a prescribed timeframe for response. All relevant information is included in the Accreditation Guide, already distributed to the HEIs.

❖ AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 4

(ESG 2.7 Periodic reviews - ENQA Criterion 1 cont.)

ENQA Panel Recommendation: The Panel recommends that HQA's new programme of work be carefully planned, phased and monitored, so as to ensure its timely delivery.

ENQA Board Recommendation: Regarding this standard, the Board's judgement differs from that on the panel. The Board noted a discrepancy between the conclusion of the review panel and the evidence brought forward in the report. Substantial compliance was reported whereas some requirements of this criterion are obviously not met, which leads to a finding of a partial compliance.

HQA follow-up: Taking into consideration the above recommendations, HQA has carefully scheduled the work plan 2017-2020 towards the accreditation of 420 undergraduate study programmes and 36 internal quality assurance systems of the HEIs, in order to avoid unnecessary discrepancies. HQA believes that hopefully no uncalled for delay will occur, as now a culture of evaluation and quality assurance has initially been established and a climate of confidence and collaboration has been created. Furthermore HQA can build on the valuable

experience gained from the last years' work to achieve more effective planning and job allocation.

❖ AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 5

(ESG 2.8 System-wide analysis - ENQA Criterion 1 cont.)

ENQA Panel Recommendation: That HQA considers how the outputs from its review activities can be further focused to support system-wide analysis and institutional quality improvement and enhancement.

The Panel recognizes the constraints currently faced by the Agency through significant financial pressures and the volume of procedure-driven activity. However, it is recommended that, to fully realise its potential, the Agency discuss with its stakeholders options to increase its resources for this purpose. The additional resource thus gained could then be directed to increase the volume of system-wide analysis and quality enhancement activity which HQA can undertake.

ENQA Board Recommendation: Substantial compliance was reported whereas the evidence provided shows that the criterion is fully met. In the opinion of the Board, the fact that "HQA's human capacity for system-wide analysis is severely constrained" is not an obstacle to grant this criterion full compliance.

HQA follow-up: The intention of HQA is to enhance its role as an advisory body, as described in its mission statement. In this direction, HQA has prepared a concrete report on "National Strategy for Higher Education 2016-2020", which was submitted to the Ministry of Education in July 2015. Also, the 2015 Annual Report included analysis on number of areas related to the nation Higher Education System, in the context of the National Strategy for Higher Education 2016-2020. Last, HQA is committed to exploit the data to be selected during the accreditation process and produce generic reports and comparative analyses, taking full advantage of the Business Intelligence and reporting tools provided by the new MIS. Further to that, two new scientific staff have been recently recruited to support this task.

❖ AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 6

(ESG 3.4 Resources - ENQA Criterion 3)

ENQA Panel Recommendation: That HQA be encouraged to develop and pursue its strategy for maintaining and increasing its resources (including those for staffing, finance, hardware and software), in order both to maintain its programme of work and also to develop its capacity for sector-wide analysis.

ENQA Board Recommendation: The Board regards the criterion as fully met, although the budgetary constraints remain a matter of concern. The Board concurs with the panel to recommend HQA to "develop and pursue the agency's strategy for maintaining and increasing its resources (including those for staffing,

finance, hardware and software), in order both to maintain its programme of work and also to develop its capacity for sector-wide analysis”.

HQA follow-up: A significant upgrade of hardware and software resources has been achieved in 2016, with the provision of the modern PC and MIS to enhance the everyday activities (finance office, file keeping, registry of experts platform) and support more specialized tasks, such as data collection from the HEIs and reporting drafting. The recruitment of new members of staff (currently 20, instead of 14 in early 2015) contributes in the drafting of sector-wide analyses.

❖ AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 7

(ESG 3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies - ENQA Criterion 6)

ENQA Panel Recommendation: The Panel recommends that discussions be pursued by the Ministry of Education so as to permit student representation on HQA review panels and to facilitate a review mechanism for panel decisions in line with best practice set out in the ESG.

ENQA Board Recommendation: Substantial compliance was reported whereas students are not involved in site visits and there is no appeal procedure. These two are serious issues. The Agency is advised to promptly address these weaknesses as the revised ESG will be more challenging in terms of student involvement and appeals. In addition, there is no formal external follow-up with respective actions. All this leads to a finding of partial compliance.

HQA follow-up: This area of improvement addresses a threefold purpose: (a) follow-up procedure, (b) appeal procedure, and (c) student participation in review panels.

As regards (a), the course of action is presented in Area of Development 3 above. With regard to (b), i.e. the possibility of an HEI to launch an appeal against a formal Board decision (e.g. accreditation decision), an appeal procedure is provided and described in detail in the Accreditation Guide which has been recently issued.

To address (c), i.e. the important issue of student participation in review panels, HQA makes on-going efforts towards the amendment of the legislation, as noted also in Area of Development 2.

❖ AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 8

(ESG 3.8 Accountability procedures - ENQA Criterion 7)

ENQA Panel Recommendation: Given the growth in HQA activity it may now be timely to formalize aspects of HQA’s internal feedback arrangements; the Council should consider this in consultation with the Director General.

ENQA Board Recommendation: HQA has put a number of measures in place to secure its own accountability. The Board noted that only a formalized internal QA procedure is missing, but internal reflection takes place regularly, including the bi-monthly Council meeting. Results for external feedback have testified of strong support from the Secretariat for external reviews. Partial compliance was reported whereas, in the light of the above, the Board regards this criterion as substantially met.

HQA follow-up: The formalization of internal QA and mode of work has been implemented in compliance with ENQA recommendation and in alignment with the recently launched ISO 9001:2015 (HQA was successfully audited against ISO 9001:2015 in March 2017). A revised framework for QA has been drafted and disseminated among the staff. Among others, the new framework provides for regular feedback meetings and processes in line with the HQA published strategy.

❖ **AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 9**

(ENQA Criterion 8ii - Miscellaneous)

ENQA Board Recommendation: The agency does not have an appeals procedure in place (see ESG 3.7). Therefore, the Board regards this criterion (8ii) as not met (non-compliant) and its judgement for criterion 8 as a whole is partial compliance.

HQA follow-up: As mentioned in Area of Development 7, an appeal procedure is provided and described in detail in the Accreditation Guide which has been recently issued.