

ENQA AGENCY REVIEW

# INDEPENDENT AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION (IQAA)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses the compliance of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA) with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG). The purpose of the review is to verify that IQAA acts in substantial compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015. ENQA requires all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review at least once every five years and compliance with the ESG is a condition for membership.

This review was conducted between July 2021 when the Self-Assessment Review (SAR) document was received, and December 2021 when the draft report was submitted to ENQA. In light of the documented and oral evidence considered by the review panel regarding the activities, decisions, and bodies in place at the time of the site visit (October 2021), the overall conclusion is presented in this summary below.

IQAA is regarded by the stakeholders as a competent association that is managed efficiently and effectively. The agency also enjoys a good level of satisfaction among external stakeholders (institutions and reviewers) and internal ones (staff).

Founded in 2008, it was the first external quality assurance agency in Kazakhstan supported by the academic community of Kazakhstan. The extent of its activities is well established and is mainly focussed on programme and institutional accreditation in Kazakhstan.

In Kazakhstan, agencies are private organisations and fully responsible for all the external quality assurance processes. IQAA faces strong competition from other agencies operating in the country.

The panel notes the high reputation of the agency in the Kazakh higher education community. This is among other things due to the ability to choose good experts with a good knowledge of quality assurance processes and the internal coordinators who assure consistent processes. Another issue that was remarked by higher education institutions was the objectivity of the agency in its assessments and its ability to work independently both from government and from higher education institutions. IQAA was also commended for maintaining high academic standards even though it acts in a quite competitive environment where there could be a risk to lower the standards to attract more clients. IQAA was the first agency in Kazakhstan to introduce ethical standards in the quality assurance concept, which was also acknowledged by the stakeholders.

IQAA has a solid position in external quality assurance in higher education driven by the well-functioning of its quality assurance processes. Higher education institutions and experts considered that the processes are clear, well organised and efficiently managed.

IQAA maintains a good relationship with employers and the business community. The involvement of students in the organisation and in quality assurance procedures is good, even though student representation is not very well organised in Kazakhstan.

The panel identified some challenges and key areas for further development.

For example, IQAA could initiate more thematic analyses. IQAA produces a great number of reports that are a valuable source of information that could be used more in benefit of the institutions and other stakeholders. Also, the panel recommends a more systematic approach to identify the themes for thematic analyses and a long-term planning.

The agency has made a good improvement to reporting since the last review when it comes to publishing all the reports together with the Accreditation Council decision. However, reports from initial accreditation and post accreditation monitoring are still not published, which the panel recommends doing.

Although everybody appreciated the clear methodology of IQAA in its external quality assurance processes and the processes' potential for enhancing quality, the methodology seems in some respects to be too focused on checking if the institution's documents fulfil the prescriptions or requirements of IQAA's criteria. In the future, the panel suggests that IQAA should focus even more on the real practice within institutions and to what extent the procedures work and have an impact on students and the learning processes.

The last challenge relates to the internal quality assurance system of IQAA. The agency could do more in not only describing the policies but also in reflecting on how to develop a more proactive engagement in the definition of its internal quality system processes. For example, to develop the internal follow-up processes or to include an internal improvement plan like the one that is requested from the agency to higher education institutions. The panel recommends describing with more detail how the internal learning loops are organised.

The review panel is confident that its findings will provide support and input towards further enhancement of the work of the agency in the near future.

To conclude, the panel finds IQAA fully compliant with the ESG standards:

- 3.2.(Official status)
- 3.3 (Independence)
- 3.5 (Resources)
- 3.7 (Cyclical external review of agencies)
- 2.4 (Peer review experts)

Further the panel also finds IQAA substantially compliant with the ESG standards:

- 3.1 (Activities, policies and procedures for quality assurance)
- 3.6 (Internal quality assurance and professional conduct)
- 2.1 (Consideration of internal quality assurance)
- 2.2 (Designing methodologies fit for purpose)
- 2.3 (Implementing processes)
- 2.5 (Criteria for outcomes)
- 2.6 (Reporting)
- 2.7 (Complaints and appeals)

Finally, according to the judgement of the panel, IQAA is partially compliant with the ESG standard:

- 3.4 (Thematic analysis).

# INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of the Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, IQAA, (Білім сапасын қамтамасыздандыру бойынша тәуелсіз агенттігі) with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). It is based on an external review conducted in six months between July 2021 and December 2021.

## 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, to verify that they act in substantial compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015.

As this is IQAA's second review, the panel is expected to provide clear evidence of results in all areas and to acknowledge progress from the previous review. The panel has adopted a developmental approach, as the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* aim at constant enhancement of the agencies.

### MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2017 REVIEW

When the first review of IQAA was undertaken in 2017, IQAA was a quite young agency. Though established in 2008, it had been expanding its activities only since the end of 2011. This first review took place in the context of gradual changes in the national framework.

The main conclusions of the review panel were the following:

- IQAA was considered fully compliant with ESG 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.7.
- IQAA was considered substantially compliant with ESG 3.1, 3.6, 2.1 and 2.5.
- IQAA was considered partially compliant with ESG 3.4, 2.2 and 2.6.

Given those assessments, the panel at that time made several recommendations. Namely, it recommended to the agency the following:

ESG 3.1: amend its Statutes to explicitly assign the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of its strategy to a governing body and put in place formal mechanisms for translating its strategic objectives into its daily activities and for measuring progress towards its strategic objectives;

ESG 3.4: analyse the material available in its accreditation review reports and produce on this basis (a) thematic analysis(es) to support further development of quality assurance in higher education institutions and policy development at national level;

ESG 3.5: consider allocating some resources specifically for English language training of staff in the coming years;

ESG 3.6: put in place, as part of its internal quality assurance system, a formal mechanism for regular self-analysis and self-assessment and use of findings from the process for institutional enhancement;

ESG 2.1:

(1) focus more strongly on the effectiveness of internal quality assurance in its accreditation methodology, while allowing for the varying progress made by institutions in the development of their internal quality assurance systems;

(2) refine its accreditation standards concerning student-centred learning (corresponding to ESG 1.3) so that they give more consideration to how the concept is translated into pedagogical approaches and assessment practices; and

(3) give more consideration to the primary responsibility of institutions for quality in its interpretation of ESG 1.9;

ESG 2.2: in order to make its external quality assurance methodology better fit for purpose,

(1) phase out its preliminary review process;

(2) redesign its post-accreditation monitoring process before the second cycle of accreditation reviews, so that it focuses on follow-up on action taken by institutions in response to findings from accreditation reviews (rather than on progress they make towards meeting its accreditation standards, with a view to facilitating reaccreditation);

and to balance this, (3) expand its QA capacity building activities for institutions, in particular on IQA, so that they are better prepared to undergo an accreditation review and take primary responsibility for quality and its assurance; put in place a mechanism for regular review of its methodology, including arrangements for regular collection of feedback on its fitness for purpose from its external stakeholders;

ESG 2.3: for greater clarity, amend its regulations on programme accreditation so that they refer more explicitly to the compulsory status of post-accreditation monitoring and define more precisely its scope;

ESG 2.4: consider providing international experts with additional training and/or materials on the national higher education and quality assurance context;

ESG 2.5:

(1) amend its Provision on decision-making of the IQAA Accreditation Council concerning institutional accreditation to explicitly authorise the Council to adjust algorithm based ratings in justified cases (as is currently the case for programme accreditation);

(2) revise its guidelines for experts so that they define more precisely minimum requirements to be fulfilled or acceptable shortcomings for each of the four levels of compliance with its accreditation standards;

ESG 2.6:

(1) amend its regulations so that they state explicitly that accreditation review reports are published on its website regardless of the final outcome of a review;

(2) accordingly, publish all reports and related decisions of the Accreditation Council at least on its main website. IQAA may also consider the value of publishing summaries in English of all accreditation review reports, including those leading to conditional accreditation and non-accreditation, on its English-language website.

In February 2017, the Board of ENQA concluded that IQAA is in substantial compliance with the ESG.

The Board recommended that IQAA ensures that it has sufficient human resources and also that it strengthens its approach to thematic analysis.

After the follow-up report provided by IQAA in February 2019, the Board has especially emphasised the need to continue with the efforts in addressing the recommendation for standard 3.1 Activities,

policy, and processes for quality assurance, and most of all the need to measure progress in the agency's daily activities towards achieving the agency's strategic objectives.

## REVIEW PROCESS

The 2021 external review of IQAA was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the external review of IQAA was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Tue Vinther-Jørgensen, Chief Consultant, Ministry of Higher Education and Science, Denmark – Chair, quality assurance professional (ENQA nominee).
- Núria Comet Señal, Responsible for internal quality assurance and project coordinator, AQU Catalunya, Spain – Secretary, quality assurance professional (ENQA nominee).
- Tatjana Volkova, Professor, BA School of Business and Finance, Latvia – Panel member, academic (EUA nominee).
- Maria-Giovanna Lolito, Student, Science of Public Administration, University of Teramo, Italy – Panel member, student (ESU nominee, member of the European Students' Union Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool).

Following the ENQA methodology for agency reviews (*Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, 2016*) the panel was supported by Anna Gover, ENQA Secretariat member, as coordinator of the review throughout the process from preparation to the site visit to production of the external review report. The ENQA review coordinator's contribution was significant in assuring smoothness of the remote visit to the agency and overall quality of the review.

The review panel was initially provided with the self-assessment report (SAR) including some appendices. 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. In addition, because not all relevant documentation was available in English, the panel requested IQAA to translate some relevant documents. Other documents were translated by one of the panel members who was fluent in Russian. During the site visit, the panel also requested further information, which was provided immediately.

The ENQA review coordinator organised a preparatory online briefing for the panel on 3 September 2021. In addition, the panel held some additional preparatory online meetings during September 2021.

Mr. Daulet Kalanov from IQAA acted as the agency resource person to support the organisation of the review, and he, the president, and the heads of IQAA departments also participated in a very informative pre-visit meeting.

The panel conducted an online site visit from 4 to 8 October 2021. In all the sessions, Russian/English interpretation was provided by two independent interpreters.

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. In doing so, the panel provided an opportunity for IQAA to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report.

The review panel is very grateful to IQAA 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**

IQAA produced a SAR, which followed the template provided by ENQA. The SAR was accompanied by five appendices.

According to IQAA, the agency's self-assessment process and the preparation of the SAR began in the summer of 2020 and finished in June 2021. According to IQAA, the production of the SAR consisted of the following stages:

- Data collection, study of international experience, collection of internal and external communications conducted by all IQAA departments.
- Development of the draft SAR with the participation of all IQAA departments.
- Evaluation of the feedback and recommendations for improving the SAR and final review of the SAR conducted by a working group composed of five internal members.

The SAR was sent for comments and suggestions to international experts who are involved in the work of the agency and the Supervisory Board, to external review experts, to the members of the Supervisory Board, the Accreditation Council and the Complaints and Appeals Committees. The final report was then translated into English.

The panel considers that IQAA elaborated a SAR with a satisfactory level of information, although it provided only a limited self-analysis and lacked evidence in some areas. Nevertheless, the panel had the opportunity to ask for necessary and sufficient additional evidence.

## **Site visit**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the review panel agreed with ENQA and with IQAA that the site visit should be conducted in an online format.

The site visit was spread across five days in order to account for the time zone differences of the agency and the panel members. The site visit took place remotely on 4-8 October 2021 using Zoom, which functioned smoothly. The use of simultaneous interpretation in Russian/English was very helpful and worked perfectly.

The panel had an opportunity to talk to all interviewees as foreseen in the visit schedule. During the five days of the visit the panel held 15 meetings.

The panel appreciates the contributions from all IQAA 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 institutions, ministry representative, 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.

## HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE AGENCY

### HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Kazakh education system and accreditation system are regulated by the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education” from 27 July 2007, with amendments and additions as of 2021. The law addresses all levels of education.

Currently, Kazakhstan implements a three-level "bachelor-master-doctor/PhD" system of higher education:

Higher basic education:

- 1) Bachelor's programme – with a duration of 4 years;

Postgraduate higher education:

- 2) Master's programme – with a duration of 1 year in a specialised field, and 2 years in a scientific-pedagogical direction;
- 3) The programme for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), doctors by profile – with a duration of at least 3 years.

In 2011, in order to increase the academic mobility of students and teachers, as well as improving the quality of education and ensuring the continuity of all levels and stages of higher and postgraduate education, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan introduced the transition from the American Credit System to European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was developed and approved in Kazakhstan in 2016. It contains eight levels and formally corresponds to the European Qualifications Framework adopted in 2008.

There are 128 higher education institutions in Kazakhstan 2020-2021\*:

Type	Number
National	11
International	1
Autonomous education organisation (AEO)	1
State	29
Joint stock	17
Private	55
Military	14

\*Source: SAR

According to the statistics presented by the Bureau of the National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as of the beginning of academic year 2020-2021, the total number of students is 618,090:

- at bachelor's level – 576,557 students,
- at master's level – 34,619 students,
- and at PhD level – 6,914 students.

The total number of teaching staff is 36,307.

In July 2018, the Ministry of Education and Science made a number of changes and additions to certain legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan in three main areas of activity of higher education institutions: academic, managerial and financial.

Firstly, the level of academic freedom in higher education institutions was expanded, so that higher education institutions are now allowed to develop educational programmes independently, except for programmes for the cycle of general education disciplines in accordance with the State Compulsory Education Standard (SCES).

The organisational and legal form of universities was changed, so that all state universities in Kazakhstan were transformed into non-profit joint stock companies with 100% state participation.

In addition, universities now can establish endowment funds, start-up companies and attract additional sources of funds to support their activities. According to the SAR, the development of the export of educational services in higher education has led to an increase in the share of foreign students in universities to 6.7%.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

The implementation of the State Programme of the Development of Education 2011-2020 served as the basis for the adoption of amendments to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education” in 2011. According to the law, the Ministry of Education and Science establishes the requirements and procedure for the recognition of accreditation agencies and allows the financing of higher education institutions on the basis of state educational grants only to accredited higher education institutions.

In 2017, in accordance with the State Programme of the Development of Education 2016-2019, the Ministry of Education and Science implemented a complete transition of higher education institutions from state certification to independent accreditation.

The Law “On Education” stipulates that accreditation is voluntary, and higher education institutions are free in choosing accreditation agencies. The only requirement of the law is for higher education institutions to be accredited by accreditation agencies that are listed in the Register of the Ministry of Education and Science to receive state educational grants.

The regulation implies that institutions that want to receive state educational grants must achieve both institutional accreditation and programme accreditation.

At the time of the review, there were 11 accreditation agencies in the National Register:

- six Kazakh agencies – IQAA, IAAR, ARQA, KAZSEE, EACAQA and HKIJA;
- five foreign agencies – ACQUIN (Germany), ASIIN (Germany), AQA (Austria), FIBAA (Germany), and ACBSP (United States).

According to IQAA, the presence of such a high number of accreditation bodies in Kazakhstan creates a very competitive environment for quality assurance agencies. The government has planned to introduce full ENQA membership or listing in EQAR as a new requirement for agencies to be included in the National Register of Accreditation Agencies. Of the six national agencies, only IQAA and one other agency are currently ENQA members and listed in EQAR. IQAA holds a leading position among the quality assurance agencies in terms of the number of higher education institutions that it has accredited.

## IQAA

IQAA was established as a non-governmental, non-profit private quality assurance agency in 2008. According to IQAA, the academic community of Kazakhstan supported the creation of the organisation as the first quality assurance agency in Kazakhstan. In this way, IQAA became a pioneer in the introduction of accreditation in Kazakhstan.

IQAA conducted its first institutional accreditation of a higher education institution in 2009. The agency worked closely with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan to introduce legislative amendments to the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan in order to introduce mechanisms to motivate higher education institutions to undergo accreditation.

An amendment to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education” in 2011, according to which only accredited higher education institutions could receive public funding based on educational grants, led to a significant change. Consequently, the state higher education institutions became the first ones to be interested in undergoing accreditation.

IQAA’s membership in ENQA in February 2017 and subsequent registration in EQAR in June 2017 contributed to the expansion of the agency’s activities on an international level. The re-registration of IQAA in the National Register of Accreditation Agencies took place in 2017 according to IQAA’s SAR, and is valid for a period of five years.

### IQAA’S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE

IQAA has several bodies in its governance and management structures. These are outlined below.

#### **The Supervisory Board:**

The Supervisory Board is the highest governing body of the agency. The Supervisory Board is a collegial body nominated and appointed by the president of IQAA and composed of five members from the academic community, accreditation bodies, and employers.

Currently, the Supervisory Board is composed of:

- the chair;
- a member of the Parliament;
- an international expert in the field of quality assurance of higher education;
- a representative of employers;
- the president of the agency.

The main function of the Supervisory Board is to approve the agency’s Strategy of Development, the regulations on the Accreditation Council, annual reports and work plans, and participate in key IQAA events.

#### **The Accreditation Council:**

The Accreditation Council is a collegial body composed of representatives of key stakeholder groups: education institutions and research institutes, an international expert, at least one representative from students and at least one representative from employers.

The functions of the Accreditation Council are:

- making decisions on institutional accreditation;
- making decisions on programme accreditation;
- approval of standards and criteria for institutional accreditation;

- approval of standards and criteria for programme accreditation (Bachelor's degree, Master's degree);
- approval of standards and criteria for doctoral degree programmes;
- approval of the external standard of conducting external visits (audits) in education organisations;
- approval of the Regulations on the Appeals Commission and the appeals procedure;
- approval of the Regulations on the Commission of Complaints and procedure of reviewing complaints;
- approval of other documents within the competence of the Accreditation Council.

### **IQAA's president**

IQAA's president is the agency's chief executive. She carries out the general management of the agency, ensures effectiveness of the activities, signs contracts and agreements on behalf of the agency, approves internal regulations, rules, procedures and other documents regulating activities of the agency, and represents IQAA in state and civic structures.

### **Expert councils**

Expert councils are collegial bodies whose members are review experts for institutional accreditation and accreditation of educational programmes by fields. IQAA has nine expert councils. The president of IQAA appoints the members, after a selection done by three heads of IQAA's departments. This selection is primarily based on the candidates former work as members of review panels and other relevant merits. The composition of the expert councils includes its head, deputy head and 3-4 experts depending on the number of programs assigned to the council.

The main tasks of the expert councils are the reviewing of reports prepared by external review panels and the preparation of conclusions based on the results of external reviews for the meetings of the Accreditation Council. Each expert council includes persons from higher education institutions who are experts in the council's academic field. The Regulations on expert councils are available on the IQAA website.

### **The Appeals Commission**

The Appeals Commission is a collegial body that considers appeals by higher education institutions against decisions of the Accreditation Council for institutional and programme accreditation. The decision on an appeal is made by the Appeals Commission in accordance with the Regulations on the Appeals Commission and the Appeals Procedure.

The Appeals Commission consists of five experts with significant experience in the field of quality assurance in higher education, the majority of whom have qualifications in law. They are selected based on proposals from higher education institutions, employers and IQAA. The Appeals Commission is appointed by the president of IQAA.

### **The Complaints Commission**

The main task of the Complaints Commission is to consider complaints from institutions undergoing institutional or program accreditation. The Complaints Commission consists of persons from the academic community of Kazakhstan and can include up to five members. At the time of the review, it is composed of four academic members, who are selected on the basis of proposals from higher education institutions and IQAA. The members are appointed by the president of IQAA.

## IQAA staff

The IQAA team consists of the president, and 19 full-time employees divided in five departments:

- Administrative and International Relations Department: five employees.
- Department of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions: four employees.
- Department for Reviewing External Review Reports and Post-Accreditation Monitoring: four employees.
- Department of Analysis and Quality: three employees.
- Department of Databases and Information Technologies: three employees.

Three of the employees hold PhD-degrees while the rest holds master's, bachelor's, candidates of sciences or specialist degrees.

## IQAA'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES

IQAA conducts several quality assurance activities, inside and outside the scope of ESG.

The activities inside ESG can be divided in two main groups:

- Institutional accreditation of higher education institutions and research institutes
- Programme accreditation of higher education institutions and research institutes.

Activity	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021-1 <sup>st</sup> sem
Institutional accreditation – HEIs	4	14	19	10	9
Institutional accreditation - research institutes	2	1	0	2	0
Programme accreditation - HEIs	277	152	648	249	191
Programme accreditation - research institutes	8	1	1	1	0

Source: Additional evidence provided to the panel by IQAA.

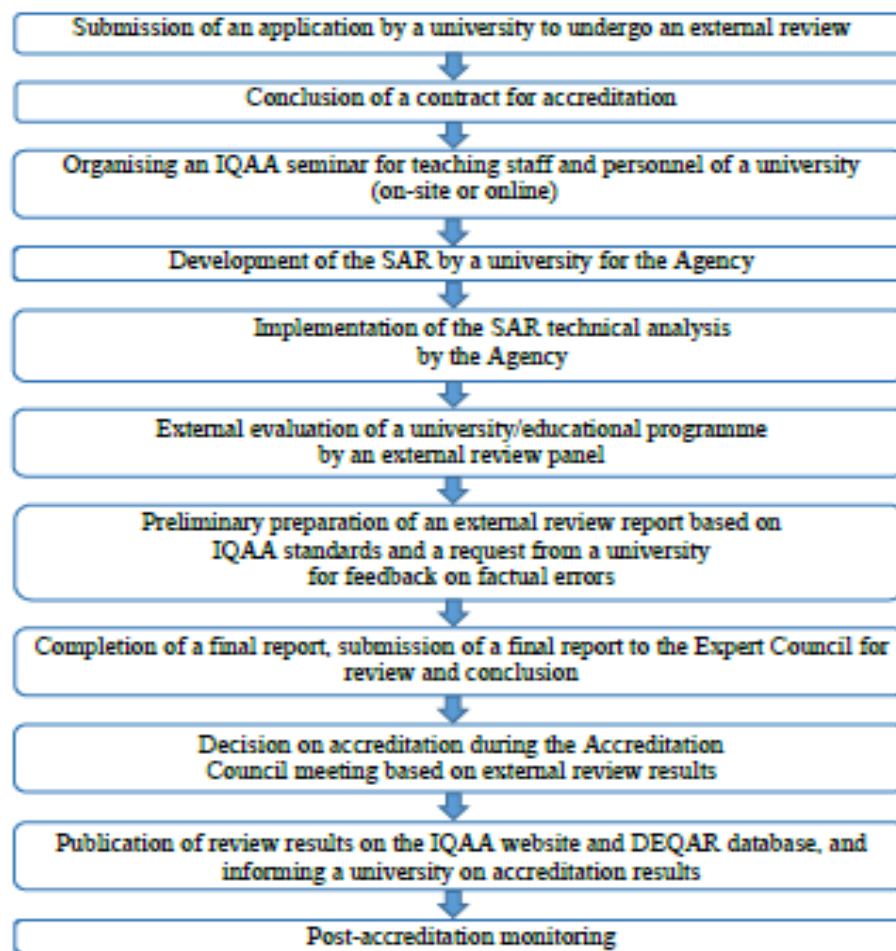
Included in institutional accreditation, there are several procedures with slight differences:

- Institutional accreditation of higher education institutions;
- Initial institutional accreditation of higher education institutions;
- Institutional accreditation of the departments of education of research institutes;
- Cross-border institutional accreditation of higher and postgraduate education institutions.

Included in programme accreditation, there are several processes depending of the type of programme:

- Accreditation of educational programmes (bachelor's and master's degrees) of higher education institutions;
- Initial accreditation of educational programmes (bachelor's and master's degrees) of higher education institutions;
- Accreditation of doctoral degree educational programmes of higher education institutions;
- Initial accreditation of doctoral degree educational programmes of higher education institutions;
- Cross-border programme accreditation of higher and postgraduate education.

The procedures for both institutional and programme accreditation follow the following phases:



\*Source: SAR

IQAA's external quality assurance activities outside of the scope of this review and not included in the terms of reference for this review are:

- Organisation and carrying out of institutional and programme accreditation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutions (TVET) and of institutional accreditation of continuous education centres.

The separation of these activities from activities inside the scope of the ESG is clear and well defined. On the one hand, the institutions are not higher education institutions. On the other hand, the application form, the web page or the register of TVET institutions and continuous education centres are separated from those of higher education institutions.

IQAA also has other types of activities including:

- Organisation of international conferences, workshops, and forums on quality assurance of higher education;
- Cooperation with foreign accreditation agencies;
- Participation and membership in international quality assurance associations and networks;
- Taking part in international projects (including Erasmus+ projects);
- Participation in the development of normative and legal acts on the assessment of the quality of education, developed by the Ministry of Education and Science;

- Participation in round tables and other meetings held by the Majilis (Lower Chamber) and the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan on quality assurance in education;

The fifth strategic priority of the IQAA Development Strategy 2019-2023 is "Recognition of the agency on an international level". Internationalisation of the agency takes form as memberships in international networks and registers:

- ENQA – associate membership/affiliate status since 2008, membership since 2017;
- INQAAHE – full membership since 2008;
- APQN – full membership since 2008;
- CEENQA – full membership since 2014;
- CIQG-CHEA – full membership since 2015;
- EQAR – registration since 2017.

In addition to this, IQAA participates in a number of international projects:

- C3QA – Erasmus+ project “Promoting Internationalisation of Research through Establishment and Operationalisation of Cycle 3 Quality Assurance System in line with the European Integration Agenda”,
- DEQAR CONNECT, Erasmus+ project “*Enhancing the Coverage and Connectivity of QA in the EHEA through DEQAR*”,
- KazDual, Erasmus+ project “Implementation of the Dual System in Kazakhstan”.

The agency also organises international events, for example the annual Eurasian Forum on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in October 2020 with 300 participants from 15 countries.

## IQAA'S FUNDING

Fees for institutional and programme accreditation paid by higher education institutions, TVET institutions, and research institutes form the main source of the agency's budget. Accreditation processes are carried out based on bilateral contracts between educational institutions and the agency. The legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan does not allow financing of the accreditation agencies from the state budget.



# FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF IQAA WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG)

## ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

### ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

#### 2017 review recommendation

The panel recommends that IQAA amend its Statutes to explicitly assign the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of its strategy to a governing body and put in place formal mechanisms for translating its strategic objectives into its daily activities and for measuring progress towards its strategic objectives.

#### Evidence

IQAA has defined its mission, vision, values, a policy, and some strategic priorities. These are all published on the agency's website.

The mission of IQAA is to contribute to improving the quality of education institutions, to increase their competitiveness at national and international levels through the development of a quality culture.

The vision is to be an organisation acting and recognised not only at national level, but also at international level. According to the vision, the agency works on development of new ideas and forms of quality assurance in educational institutions, focused on results with a professional, creative team of employees.

IQAA's six values are independence and integrity, professionalism, accountability, commitment to quality, cooperation, and ability to change.

The document "The Strategy Development of IQAA" defines the strategic priorities and main directions of activities that the agency will carry out over the next five years. For the period 2019-2023, IQAA have described five strategic priorities:

- 1- In conditions of competition between agencies in Kazakhstan, IQAA remains a reliable partner of educational organizations and conducts an external assessment of universities, colleges, centers and their educational programs.
- 2- The activities of IQAA are professional and efficient.
- 3- Provision by the Agency of timely and reliable information for interested parties about the quality of the activities of educational institutions.
- 4- Promotion of an organizational culture for the success of the Agency.
- 5- International recognition of the Agency.

Every year, the agency translates the strategic priorities into annual plans.

Since the 2017 review, IQAA has changed its Statutes and established the Supervisory Board. The responsibility for approving and overseeing the implementation of IQAA's Strategy of Development has – among other tasks – been assigned to the Supervisory Board and described in the Regulations on the Supervisory Board. The panel could confirm this responsibility of the Supervisory Board during the meeting with the board members as well as in the meetings with IQAA's management.

The main activity of the agency is carrying out institutional and programme accreditation in Kazakhstan. Although some accreditations have been conducted outside the country, they cannot be considered a main activity. The SWOT analysis provided by the agency in the SAR identifies international quality assurance activities as an opportunity to broaden the field of work, so this activity might grow in importance in the next years.

IQAA(IQAA-Accreditation) has a sister organisation conducting rankings of higher education programmes and institutions: IQAA-Rankings. IQAA-Rankings has been established since the 2008 in order to clearly separate the accreditation and the ranking activities. IQAA-Rankings have its own web site and an independent legal basis. The president of IQAA (IQAA-Accreditation) is also the president for IQAA-Rankings.

The participation of stakeholders in the governance of the agency, in particular higher educational institutions, is made possible through their memberships of the different governing bodies. Students participate in the Accreditation Council and employers' representatives in the Supervisory Board and in the Accreditation Council (see section IQAA Organisation in this report).

The stakeholders' participation is described in the different regulations. Apart from the participation in the governing bodies, the higher educational institutions highlighted in the interviews the possibility to communicate and to express their concerns with the agency through meetings and seminars. Regarding the employers, the agency stands out for a great number of agreements with different entrepreneurial associations, as indicated in the website. Stakeholders are also invited to nominate experts to IQAA's pool of experts.

IQAA also includes international members in the governing bodies, including in the Supervisory Board and in the Accreditation Council, and recruit international experts to the accreditation panels (see ESG 2.4).

## **Analysis**

In the document "The Strategy Development of IQAA" it is indicated that "*strategic goals have been updated, strategic approaches have been defined in more detail, and quantitative indicators, according to which the progress of the implementation of strategic goals will be periodically assessed, have been developed clearer*".

In the opinion of the panel, IQAA's strategic approach is still not well defined, although the overall mission and vision for the agency as an independent accreditation body are clear and firmly implemented in the external quality assurance processes. The five strategic priorities defined by IQAA are also clear and linked to the mission of the agency, as is the translation of the priorities into annual plans. However, the panel does not find it sufficiently clear how the strategic goals and objectives for the development of the agency are translated into the daily work. This is due to a number of factors:

- "The Strategic Development of IQAA" does not include clear objectives that could guide the development of the daily work with accreditation procedures.
- The assessment indicators described in the "The Strategic Development of IQAA" are a mixture of concrete activities or compulsory requirements, such as the publication of

accreditation reports and some quantitative indicators. Therefore, some times it is difficult to visualise or measure the degree of progress.

- The meetings with the management and staff during the site visit did not provide any further evidence about the way the agency collects information about the implementation and follows up on its strategic development, although informal approaches like discussions at staff meetings etc. were observed.
- The panel has not observed any formal procedure that indicates how the strategy is developed, when, or who formulates it. However, the meeting with the Supervisory Board confirmed that the board had discussed a draft of the document “The Strategy Development of IQAA” and approved the final version.
- “The Strategic Development of IQAA” does not define responsibilities, stakeholders affected or set a timeline for its implementation.

The annual work plans, organised from the strategic priorities, are more detailed, including allocation of responsibilities, expected outcomes and timelines. However, they do not include quantitative indicators that would allow for appraising the degree of progress, and it will be difficult to evaluate the level of attainment of the strategic priorities at the end of the strategy period in 2023. Although the panel was informed during the site visit that a follow-up is carried out with periodic meetings of the responsible managers, this activity is not formalised with reports, decisions on corrective actions, etc. Therefore, the panel considers that the potential for learning and continuous development is not yet fulfilled.

As it is shown in the table of the section “IQAA’s functions, activities, procedures” of this report, IQAA carries out external quality assurance activities on a regular basis. The accreditation of programmes and institutions of higher education is the core activity of the agency. It is necessary to remember that in Kazakhstan accreditation is a private business and agencies do not receive any funding from the government. Therefore, IQAA as well as other agencies must undertake accreditation activities as on a regular basis in order to secure income.

The panel considers that the activity of the agency is well identified and appraised by the different stakeholders. They all confirmed that the agency listens and takes into account their concerns and involves them in its processes.

The involvement of stakeholders in the governance of the agency is visible through the composition of the Supervisory Board and the Accreditation Council; both are composed of key stakeholder groups: representatives of educational institutions, academic experts, student and employers’ representatives. The active role of the different stakeholders in these bodies was confirmed during the site visit. The panel finds that the establishment of the Supervisory Board is a relevant follow-up on the 2017 review recommendation mentioned above.

The agency is well valued at national level for being the first agency registered in the country, and for its role in promoting the idea of continuous quality improvements in the higher education institutions. The international experts highlighted the role of IQAA in promoting the use of European standards.

### **Panel commendations**

The panel commends the role of the agency in the country to promote quality culture and the ESG among the higher educational institutions.

### **Panel recommendations**

The panel recommends that IQAA develops a more guiding “Strategic development of IQAA” with goals and objectives defined in more detail, and supplemented by qualitative and quantitative

indicators, which can be reflected in the annual work plans and translated into the daily work of the agency and be subject to periodical monitoring and assessment.

The panel also recommends that the annual follow-up of the “Strategic development of IQAA” and the annual work plans should be formally documented in internal reports with clear learning points.

**Panel conclusion: substantially compliant**

## ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS

Standard:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

### Evidence

IQAA is a non-governmental, non-profit private organisation created to improve the quality of education and increase the competitiveness of educational institutions on national and international levels in Kazakhstan.

IQAA has the status of a legal entity and was officially registered by the Department of Justice of Astana of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2008.

Every five years since its first inclusion in the National Register of Accreditation Agencies in 2012, the agency undergoes a national assessment by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan in accordance with the Rules of Recognition of Accreditation Agencies. IQAA was the first accreditation agency registered in the country. In 2017, IQAA’s national registration was reconfirmed for a new period of five years. In 2022, the third national assessment is planned. IQAA’s official status was confirmed during the meeting with representatives from the Ministry during the site visit.

Each year, accredited agencies must forward an annual report to the Republican Accreditation Council.

With regards to cross-border activities, IQAA was included in the Register of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic for a period of five years in 2019. IQAA is also one of four registered agencies operating in Azerbaijan.

### Analysis

Following the Kazakh legal framework, IQAA has a formal legal basis in Kazakhstan, and its accreditations are formally recognised by the Ministry.

It should be noted that apart from being legally recognised, all stakeholders interviewed, including government representatives, highlighted IQAA’s prestige in the country as the first agency included in the National Register of Accreditation Bodies.

Also, IQAA’s role in promoting the European Higher Education Area and the agency’s status in European organisations is recognized. Of the six national agencies, only two are currently ENQA members and listed on EQAR. The government has planned to establish EQAR registration as a new requirement to be included in the National Register of Accreditation Bodies.

**Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

## 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.

### Evidence

#### Organisational independence

IQAA is a private organisation, which is founded and led by the president, who plays an important role in the daily operations of the agency. The agency has five governing bodies as described in the section *IQAA's Organisation/Structure* in this report. The president is a member of the Supervisory Board responsible for the overall strategic development of the agency, and she attends the meetings of the Accreditation Council, but without the right to vote. The functions and compositions of the governing bodies are described in the:

- Regulations on the Supervisory Board
- Regulations on the Accreditation Council
- Regulations on Experts Council
- Regulations on Appeal Committee
- Regulations on Complaints Committee.

The Regulations are available on the website of the agency, but access to them was protected by a code, in order to protect IQAA's intellectual property rights and due to the competitive operating context for agencies in Kazakhstan. Following the panel's conversations with the agency's management during the site visit, the agency decided to publish them without a code protecting the documents.

In relation to the activities of external quality assurance, the final decision on accreditation always lies with the Accreditation Council, regulated by the "Regulations on the Accreditation Council". Its main functions are:

- The approval of the standards and criteria that regulate the external accreditation.
- The decision about accreditation in all evaluations carried out by IQAA.

These functions were confirmed by all the internal and external interviewees during the site visit, who explained that the final decision on accreditation lies with the Accreditation Council.

The Accreditation Council is always formed by a minimum of 7 members and a maximum of 15 members, including representatives of Kazakhstani higher education institutions, participation of at least one representative from students and at least one representative from employers and an international expert. The opinion and vote of each member have the same value.

The members of the Accreditation Council are appointed for a period of five years (except students who step down when they finish their studies) from the external proposals of the higher education institutions, employers, student associations or the internal proposals coming from the Supervisory Board or by initiative of the current members of the Accreditation Council.

All members sign an Ethical Code, and in case of conflict of interest, the member in question leaves the meeting while the specific decision on accreditation is being processed.

#### Operational independence

The agency is organised in five departments managed by a responsible manager. The organisation and the functions of each department are described in the Manual of Internal Quality and the internal documentation. The recruitment of the staff is the responsibility of the president of the agency.

In the organisation, the accreditation coordinators have a relevant role in the coordination of the individual accreditation procedures. Their role has a technical and operational character, and they do not intervene either in the assessments of the accreditation panels or in the elaboration of the reports.

#### Independence of formal outcomes

As the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education” establishes, the government cannot modify the accreditation decisions taken by an independent accreditation agency.

#### **Analysis**

The panel has found sufficient evidence that IQAA acts autonomously and independently as an organisation, and that accreditation procedures and decisions are not influenced by the government or by the higher education institutions. IQAA has the necessary governing bodies for carrying out their task in an independent way. The governing bodies have the necessary formal regulations and procedures. The panel was well assured during the meetings with members of the different governing bodies that regulations were applied in a correct way.

The panel finds that operational independence of the agency is well ensured through its staff, organisational structure and the agency’s capacity to autonomously define its criteria and methodology for accreditation of higher education programmes and institutions. Through the Ethical Code and the established regulations, all the members of the councils, commissions and expert panels act in an individual capacity and do not represent the organisation to which they belong.

The President of IQAA, advised by the Supervisory Board, has full power to manage the organisation. Although, IQAA is a private organisation, the panel considers that the agency has established formal procedures and regulations of its governing bodies that ensure a professional conduct in the assessments and decision-making processes, so that the outcomes are not dependent on the views that the President might have.

About formal outcomes, the decision-making process is clearly differentiated and established. The Accreditation Council has full authority to decide if the programmes or the institutions are or are not accredited, and in case of a positive outcome the Accreditation Council can define the period of validity of the accreditation. The interview with the experts during the site visit made it clear that the expert panels appraise each standard, but do not propose the final decision, which is taken by the Accreditation Council. Therefore, the report of the experts and the final decision of the Accreditation Council are both published separately on the web page of the agency. The assessments of the expert panels and the decisions on accreditation of the Accreditation Council cannot be modified by the government.

The panel considers that the government has no influence on decisions or the management of the agency. There are no government representatives in the governing and decision-making bodies of IQAA, although the Supervisory Board is chaired by an ex-minister of education, who is also a professor with special interest for quality assurance of higher education, and includes a member of parliament. The representatives of the Supervisory Board interviewed during the site visit all confirmed that they are acting in an individual capacity, and that the discussions in the board in their nature always have the strategic development of IQAA as an agency as the focal point.

Given the competitive environment in which the agency works, one of the aspects that the panel paid special attention to was the “commercial” independence of the agency, as it was a concern to which

extent the highly competitive environment between the registered agencies could affect the quality or rigor of the accreditations carried out. During the site visit, both agency management representatives and representatives from the higher education institutions reported that the universities often prefer to pay a higher price for the accreditation processes, in order to guarantee the quality, independence, and rigor of the agency. Therefore the panel was assured that business environment in Kazakhstan external quality assurance after all is not competitive to a degree, where it does influence the quality or rigor of the accreditations carried out by IQAA.

The panel finds it important to point out that the independence of the agency from the government was praised as a strong point in the opinion of the experts, employers, higher educational institutions, and government representatives during the site visit.

### **Panel commendations**

The panel commends IQAA for its good reputation, as well as its ability to maintain high standards of quality in spite of the competitive environment in which it works.

### **Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

## ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

### **2017 review recommendation**

The panel recommends that IQAA analyse the material available in its accreditation review reports and produce on this basis (a) thematic analysis(es) to support further development of quality assurance in higher educational institutions and policy development at national level.

### **Evidence**

IQAA has carried out several thematic analyses since the last ENQA review in 2016. The Department of Analysis and Quality is responsible for carrying out this activity.

On the agency's website, there is a section named *Publications* where the presentations made in the seminars and the thematic analyses carried out are published.

According to the SAR and the website, the agency has published eleven reports named as thematic report in the last five years (2017-2021): two in 2021, four in 2020, and five in 2017. During the years 2018 and 2019 no reports were published.

### **Analysis**

IQAA has a great number of reports of institutional accreditations and programmes that can be considered an information source of high value for the higher educational institutions and other stakeholders. Since the last review, IQAA has now started to analyse them as the basis for publishing thematic analyses.

The panel analysed each one of the eleven published studies and considers that eight of them, published in 2007 and in 2020 can be considered to be thematic analyses:

- 2020-Thematic analysis of the use of institutional data from external review panel for 2019 on good practice (in Russian)
- 2020-Thematic analysis of the use of institutional data from external review panel for 2019 by area for improvement (in Russian)
- 2020-Thematic analysis of the use of institutional data from external review panel for 2019 based on comments (in Russian)
- 2017-Thematic analysis of external visit reports within the framework of institutional accreditation: key observations and recommendations (in Russian)
- 2017 -Thematic analysis: "Main comments and recommendations on specialized accreditation of educational programs in the field of "Humanities, law and business" for 2016" (in Russian)
- 2017 -Thematic analysis: "Main comments and recommendations on specialized accreditation of educational programs in the field of "Education" for 2015-2016" (in Russian)
- 2017 -Thematic analysis: "Main comments and recommendations on specialized accreditation of educational programs in the field of "Technical Sciences and technologies" for 2016" (in Russian)

The panel considers that the following reports are not thematic analysis, as they are based on the feedback from the participants in a review as a part of the agency's internal quality assurance:

- Thematic analysis based on feedback from external audit participants for 2019 (in Russian)
- Thematic analysis based on feedback from external audit participants for 2020 (in Russian)

The report "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education in Kazakhstan" is a study based on the survey at 28 universities about the impact of the pandemic in higher education in Kazakhstan. It is not related to the activities of quality assurance. However, this kind of study can also be considered valuable for the higher education society in Kazakhstan, even if it does not fall under the ESG definition of thematic analysis.

Analysing in detail the reports that the panel considers to be thematic analyses, these reports can be considered a first step in the development of a good framework for thematic analyses in IQAA: the reports collect the observations, best practices and recommendations covering a defined period of time, and the agency has picked up the information from the reports in an organised way. In the opinion of the panel the next step would be a more holistic analysis, for example not only quoting the recommendations or good practices that the experts have mentioned in reports, but also identifying trends in the last years, to establish recommendations that could help the higher education institutions to define policies and procedures etc.. These reports could be useful in Kazakhstan as well as in the nearby countries of Central Asia, where the agency is developing its influence and recognition.

The panel is satisfied to observe an improvement since the first evaluation against the ESG in 2017. However, the panel also noticed that there was still no formal plan established for the planning or the timing of the thematic analyses, studies, or selection of subjects, in order to ensure a more balanced production of analyses over the years.

The analytical approach could also be developed further. In one of the thematic analyses all types of accredited institutions were included, although more than 95% are universities and colleges, which means that the results are not affected by the last 5% of other types of institutions. It would therefore be valuable to differentiate the analyses by the typology of institutions.

To summarise, the panel finds that thematic analyses are carried out without a structured plan and with to uneven intervals, and that not all the reports that are shown as thematic analysis by the agency can be described as such in the sense that the ESG indicate. Certainly, the panel is conscious of the fine line between the activities that could be considered as part of the internal quality assurance process and thematic analysis as such.



## Panel recommendations

IQAA should develop a strategic approach to identifying potential thematic subjects for analyses and establish a calendar in the future in order to publish thematic reports with regular intervals.

IQAA should distinguish more clearly between thematic analyses and other types of analyses that have to be considered as a part of the internal quality assurance of the agency.

## Panel conclusion: partially compliant

**Note:** In its comments on factual accuracy of the draft review report, IQAA informed the panel that the agency had published one thematic analysis in 2018 (Survey results of doctoral students of universities of Kazakhstan – as part of the Erasmus+ C3QA project) and three thematic analyses based on external review reports in 2019. According to IQAA, these thematic analyses have been posted on the agency's old website, to which the panel has not had access, and have by mistake not been available at IQAA's new website. The report on doctoral students was mentioned in the SAR, whereas the three other reports were not mentioned. Following the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews (section 6.4) the panel has not reviewed these reports as they have been submitted after the site visit, and the panel has therefore not taken them into account in its assessment of ESG 3.4.

*“All relevant information should be provided to the review panel either before or during the site visit. After the site visit, only factual comments on the draft review report are possible”. (Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews)*

## ESG 3.5 RESOURCES

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

## 2017 review recommendation

The panel encourages IQAA to consider allocating some resources specifically for English language training of staff in the coming years.

### Evidence

#### Human resources

IQAA has a staff of 20 persons distributed in five departments.

From this group, eight persons are coordinators of the accreditations, all of whom are members of the Department of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, whose main task is to organise and conduct external assessments (audits) for institutional and program accreditation of higher education institutions and research institutes, and Department for Reviewing External Review Reports and Post-Accreditation Monitoring whose main task is to review external review reports for subsequent publication on the official IQAA website and DEQAR.

IQAA has developed job descriptions and regulations for each department. New employees are hired following the competence requirements described in the Manual for internal quality. These require:

“work experience in the higher education system (academic, administrative and managerial); the presence of an academic degree and academic title obtained in leading local and foreign universities; research activities in the field of education; ethics professional; high communication skills; high level of proficiency in the state and Russian languages; knowledge of English”.

The periodic training for new employees is fundamentally based on participation in external and internal seminars. In the SAR, IQAA provided a list of eleven external seminars and nine internal seminars where the staff has taken part during the last five years.

IQAA describe in the SAR, that surveys of satisfaction of the employees are carried out annually. This was confirmed in the meetings with management and employees during the site visit. The panel had the opportunity to study the results for 2020 and 2021 of the Survey of employees on the level of contentment with working conditions, which in general showed good results. IQAA also operates a system of awards as well as letters of appreciation and certificates as a way to motivate employees to high performance.

The panel did not visit the facilities as the site visit was carried out online, but the technological tools worked smoothly during the site visit. This opinion was backed-up by experts and universities who indicated that the activity of the agency was adapted to online accreditations in a correct way during the restrictions for the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Financial resources:

IQAA is a private organisation without public income from the government. Its main source of income is the fees for the accreditations that are carried out paid by the institution under review. The panel had the opportunity to study IQAA’s budget results from 2017 to 2020, which shows an equilibrium between revenues and expenses. Despite the competitive nature of external quality assurance in Kazakhstan, the management explained during the site visit that the agency never offers to conduct an accreditation for a price under the real costs.

The SWOT analysis shows that IQAA is conscious of its financial dependence on the number of accreditations that higher educational institutions request.

Different activities described in the SAR indicate that the agency has a certain financial robustness. For instance, it is remarkable that IQAA has a vocation of social responsibility organising activities for old people and families since 2016. IQAA also donated a considerable sum to a national relief fund after an accidental detonation of army supplies in the city of Arys in 2019. Finally, IQAA has been able to pay salaries to its employees during the COVID-19 lockdown unlike many other organisations in the country. On the other hand, it is stated in the SAR that the agency until now has not had enough resources to implement a recommendation from the last review to include summary reports in English of all reports – but aim at doing so more in the future.

#### **Analysis**

The figures presented in the SAR shows that a group of eight persons manages annually about 200 accreditations of programmes and 10 institutional accreditations, which could indicate a high workload among the employees of IQAA. However, during the interviews employees emphasised that they did not have a high workload during the year, except in two concrete periods of the year (November-December and March-April), where the number of accreditations is higher in order to adapt the agency to the needs of the higher educational institutions, who have time for site visits in these periods.

The panel noticed none of the representatives of reviewed universities mentioned delays in the accreditations or in the delivery of the reports in the interviews with rectors and quality assurance officials during the site visit. Therefore, the panel must conclude that the human resources are

sufficient to carry out the annual plan of work. Nevertheless the panel detects a certain risk, although it was explained in the interviews with management and staff that employees from the other departments also have the capacity to assist as coordinators in times of high workload.

In the opinion of the panel, some of the tasks that the coordinators could do, like language editing or research of mistakes in the reports, are made by the members of the Experts Councils. It would be necessary that the agency reconsider to what extent a group of persons with high qualification (Experts Council) is necessary to carry out such tasks or if it would be a better option to increase the number of coordinators and broaden their duties.

During the site visit, the panel got an understanding that the periods with no thematic analyses, for instance in 2018 and 2019, were not a result of lacking human resources in the relevant department, but a result of a lack of focus and planning from the management of IQAA.

With respect to the training, although all the external stakeholders valued the staff, and in particular the coordinators for their knowledge and their competences, of work, like technology, languages, financial the information in the SAR shows that the ongoing training has only been focused on seminars about quality assurance and related topics. The training did not promote other areas management, etc. In that way, the agency has not initiated a direct follow up on the recommendation from the last review to allocating some resources specifically for English language training of staff. According to the SAR, IQAA has considered that the general level of English language proficiency is better among the staff members today, and that organising group lessons in English would not be effective. The agency has only organised two seminars in the last five years about technological tools: "Solutions and technologies for remote work" where the Department of IQAA's Database and IT Department took part, and one internal seminar about "Cloud technologies".

During the visit, it was made evident that the agency is capable of having an efficient use of technologies, for example, making changes in the way to publish regulations or modifying the tool of research of the reports on the web site.

At financial level, the agency currently shows a balanced budget and some savings, so that they do not foresee any problems. The panel learned that there is no objective related to the future funding in the Strategic development of IQAA.

To conclude, the panel considers that IQAA has the human resources suitable and qualified to carry out the accreditations and enough financial resources. In the case of an increase of the activity, as the financial resources would be increased, the number of staff should also be increased in order to be able to manage the workload.

### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

The panel suggests elaborating a more strategic training plan where not only is included the participation in seminars, but also other formative activities in each area of work, such as technology, languages, analysis of data, economical management.

The panel suggests including objectives and strategic actions related to the finances in the strategic plan in order to reduce the impact or to mitigate the risk of a possible decrease in the number of accreditations.

### **Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

## ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

### 2017 review recommendation

The panel recommends that IQAA put in place, as part of its internal quality assurance system, a formal mechanism for regular self-analysis and self-assessment and for use of findings from the process for institutional enhancement.

### Evidence

The agency has published on the web page its policy which is considered the quality policy. Its main objective is “the increase of the quality of the results of the constant agency's activity”. Likewise, it describes the mission, vision, and values of IQAA.

According to the SAR the organisation of the internal quality assurance (IQA) is based on the PDCA methodology (Plan, Do, Check, Act).

The planning of the activities is made evident in the Strategic development for the period 2019-2023 that describes 5 strategic lines. For each line there are defined indicators named: target indicators and assessment indicators). The implementation of the Strategic development is made through the annual plan for the agency as a whole and the specific annual plans for departments. The annual plans incorporated the foreseen timelines, the foreseen outcomes and the allocation of responsibilities.

The Manual of Internal Quality includes the description of the following activities:

- Personnel Policy
- Quality assurance of key processes
- Internal and external communication
- Documentation management
- Material resources management
- Cooperation with foreign agencies
- Public accountability
- And a list of IQAA regulatory documents

The Manual explains that the agency revises the processes periodically. The Analysis and Quality Department constantly monitors the compliance of the agency's coordinators with the efficiency and timeliness of the accreditation cycle procedures during the external audit.

After each accreditation, the agency collects the opinion of the stakeholders, mainly experts, higher education institutions and internal staff through surveys. This feedback is analysed and is published in different annual reports or thematic analyses. Also, during the meetings or the seminars organised by IQAA the opinions of the stakeholders are collected too.

According to the SAR, the Analysis and Quality Department reviews and discusses survey results in order to make suggestions for improvement. On the basis of the results, the agency makes changes in

the methodological documents and other internal documents, for example about the need for the reinforcement of academic integrity. IQAA also uses the collected information to propose changes in legal regulations for external quality assurance to the government if it is found necessary by the management.

The Code of Ethics that employees and experts sign, contains general provisions on corporate ethics, work relations, and other standards of ethical conduct. For instance, it establishes ethical standards, deals with issues of conflict of interest, and requires honesty and objectivity in the review processes.

The communication with the government is ongoing with periodic meetings.

IQAA does not have suppliers subcontracted for carrying out activities related to its external quality assurance processes.

### **Analysis**

The panel's analysis of relevant documents shows that the Strategic Development of IQAA defines in a clear way the 5 strategic priorities, but, it does not show in a clear way what the objectives to attain are. The panel observed some confusion with the terminology of the concepts, for example between actions and indicators, which could explain the lack of clarity.

The panel considers the Manual of internal quality to be a relevant document that describes the main lines of performance targets, and the internal procedures attached regulate the internal functioning of the agency mainly tied to the management of staff. However, it is the view of the panel that the internal processes of the agency are not defined in sufficient detail, and procedures that describe the management of internal quality assurance processes are not possible to find either.

Likewise, there are some internal procedures where the concrete responsibilities do not always remain evident. During the interviews with both staff and management it became clear that some activities do not have a clear or single person responsible, that could be due the lack of concretion or formalisation of the responsibilities in the relevant documents.

In relation with 2017 recommendation, the follow-up and regular self-analysis of the internal processes are done always through surveys, but it is not done using quantitative indicators that could measure the processes. It would be necessary to incorporate a dashboard with indicators that can measure the attainment of the processes in a more objective way and also establish internal objectives.

The mechanisms to receive external feedback are always done by surveys, too. During the interviews and in the final meeting the panel commented on the possibility to collect the opinion, suggestions or complaints by any person through other mechanisms.

Although changes and improvements have been made evident, the agency does not present a plan of internal improvements, where all proposals and improvements are collected. A formal plan will give the possibility of follow-up actions. This formalisation would give more maturity to the internal quality assurance system.

### **Panel recommendations**

The panel recommends developing the internal quality system. It is necessary that the agency ensures that the cycle of continuous improvement is complete. For example, with the incorporation of indicators that measures the processes, introducing measurable objectives of the Strategic development and annual plans, managing a plan of improvement actions.

### **Panel conclusion: substantially compliant**

## ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Standard:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

### Evidence

IQAA became a full member of ENQA and was registered on EQAR in 2017.

With this review IQAA has applied for the renewal of its membership of ENQA and renewal of registration by EQAR.

### Analysis

The review panel has confirmed that IQAA has undertaken an external review every five years since 2017 and wants to repeat it in the next five years. The commitment of the agency to the ESG is clear.

In the close future (November 2021), the government of Kazakhstan will introduce a new regulation implying that to be a registered accreditation agency in Kazakhstan, it is compulsory to be registered in EQAR or be a full member of ENQA.

**Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

## ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

### 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.

### 2017 review recommendation

The panel recommends that IQAA: (1) focus more strongly on the effectiveness of internal quality assurance in its accreditation methodology, while allowing for the varying progress made by institutions in the development of their internal quality assurance systems; (2) refine its accreditation standards concerning student-centred learning (corresponding to ESG I.3) so that they give more consideration to how the concept is translated into pedagogical approaches and assessment practices; and (3) give more consideration to the primary responsibility of institutions for quality in its interpretation of ESG I.9.

### Evidence

IQAA has as its objective that its standards, criteria, and accreditation procedures, developed on the basis of ESG 2015, should stimulate development and continuous improvement of internal quality assurance systems of higher educational institutions, and assist in forming a quality culture.

The following accreditation procedures consider the specifics of internal quality assurance described in Part I of ESG.

- Standards and criteria for institutional accreditation of higher and postgraduate educational organisations (I).

- Standards and criteria for programme accreditation of higher and postgraduate educational organisations (II).
- Standards and criteria for programme accreditation of educational programmes of the third level (doctoral studies) (III).
- Standards and criteria for cross-border institutional accreditation of higher and postgraduate educational organisations (IV).
- Standards and criteria for cross-border programme accreditation of higher and postgraduate education (V).

These standards and criteria apply to universities and research institutes, and for initial and periodical accreditation.

The SAR includes the following table:

<b>ESG</b>	<b>Standards and criteria for institutional accreditation (I) and for cross-border institutional accreditation (IV)</b>	<b>Standards and criteria for programme accreditation (II) and for cross-border programme accreditation (V)</b>	<b>Standards and criteria for programme accreditation of educational programmes of the third level (III)</b>
I.1 Policy for quality assurance	Standard 1. Mission, strategic planning and quality assurance policy Standard 3. Management and information management; Standard 10. Public awareness	Standard 1. Policy in the field of quality assurance of the educational programme and academic integrity; Standard 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	Standard 1. Quality assurance policy and academic integrity
I.2 Design and approval of educational programmes	Standard 6. Educational programmes: their development, effectiveness, continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation	Standard 2. Development, approval of educational programmes and information management	Standard 2. The educational programme's contents
I.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	Standard 4. Student-centred learning, teaching and evaluation	Standard 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment; Standard 2. Development, approval of educational programmes and information management Standard 4. Student admission, academic performance, recognition and certification)	Standard 2. Educational programme content Standard 5. Effectiveness of the doctoral students' support
I.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	Standard 5. The admission of students, learning outcomes, recognition and qualification; Standard 4. Student-centred learning, teaching and evaluation	Standard 4. Student admission, academic performance, recognition and certification; Standard 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	Standard 1. Quality assurance policy and academic integrity
I.5 Teaching staff	Standard 7. Teaching staff; Standard 8. Research	Standard 5. Teaching staff	Standard 3. Quality of the teaching staff
I.6 Learning resources and student support	Standard 9. Resources and student support services; Standard 8. Research	Standard 6. Learning resources and student support	Standard 6. Resources
I.7 Information management	Standard 3. Management and information management; Standard 1. Mission, strategic planning and quality assurance policy	Standard 2. Development, approval of educational programmes and information management; Standard 4. Student admission, academic performance, recognition and certification	Standard 7. Effectiveness of educational programmes' learning outcomes and public awareness; Standard 1. Quality assurance policy and academic integrity

ESG	Standards and criteria for institutional accreditation (I) and for cross-border institutional accreditation (IV)	Standards and criteria for programme accreditation (II) and for cross-border programme accreditation (V)	Standards and criteria for programme accreditation of educational programmes of the third level (III)
I.8 Public information	Standard 10. Public awareness; Standard 1. Mission, strategic planning and quality assurance policy  Standard 3. Management and information management	Standard 7. Public information	Standard 7. Effectiveness of educational programme's learning outcomes and public awareness; Standard 1. Quality assurance policy and academic integrity
I.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of educational programmes	Standard 6. Educational programmes: their development, effectiveness, continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation; Standard 1. Mission, strategic planning and quality assurance policy Standard 4. Student-centred learning, teaching and evaluation Standard 5. The admission of students, learning outcomes, recognition and qualification Standard 9. Resources and student support services Standard 11. Periodic external quality assurance and	Standard 8. Continuous monitoring and periodic review of educational programmes; Standard 4. Student admission, academic performance, recognition and certification	Standard 8. Continuous monitoring and periodic review of educational programmes, periodic accreditation

## Analysis

IQAA's regulations laying down the standards explicitly refer to the ESG as their basis. It is also evident to the panel that the IQAA standards in their titles and headlines are built on the ESG and in this respect reflect the standards in part I.

The panel has checked a number of reports for both institutional accreditation and programme accreditation, and the panel can confirm that all the standards are included in the accreditation processes. During the meetings with quality assurance officers, heads of higher education institutions and experts, it was evident that the external quality assurance of IQAA aims at improving of the quality of institutions and programmes through a focus on the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance. This is also evident from the panels examination of the standards and criteria for the different procedures Nevertheless, in the opinion of the panel, the subcriteria of the standards are often too detailed. The result is that the subcriteria are often very prescriptive, and this fact risks reducing the focus of higher education institutions on the quality enhancement.

In the IQAA's follow-up report, the recommendations from the previous review have been resolved. For instance, IQAA has changed its accreditation criteria in order to strengthen the focus on the internal quality assurance procedures of the institutions and the provision of student-centred learning.



## Panel suggestions for further improvement

The panel suggest IQAA to reflect on the criteria under each standard and to reduce the level of details and examples, in order to allow that each programme or higher educational institution could demonstrate their own ways to develop their activity or be innovative in their processes in fulfilment of standards.

## Panel conclusion: fully 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.

## 2017 review recommendation

The panel recommends that in order to make its external quality assurance methodology better fit for purpose, IQAA (1) phase out its preliminary review process; and (2) redesign its post-accreditation monitoring process before the second cycle of accreditation reviews, so that it focuses on follow-up on action taken by institutions in response to findings from accreditation reviews (rather than on progress they make towards meeting its accreditation standards, with a view to facilitating reaccreditation). To balance this, the panel recommends that IQAA expand its QA capacity building activities for institutions, in particular on IQA, so that they are better prepared to undergo an accreditation review and take primary responsibility for quality and its assurance.

The panel also recommends that IQAA should put in place a mechanism for regular review of its methodology, including arrangements for regular collection of feedback on its fitness for purpose from external stakeholders.

## Evidence

In Kazakhstan, two types of accreditation processes coexist: institutional accreditation and programme accreditation. Both institutional and programme accreditation is a requirement for higher educational institutions to receive grants from the government. Higher educational institutions can choose the agency that conducts the accreditation process.

IQAA's processes and criteria have been developed, reviewed, and updated by the agency itself. The methodologies are prepared by the staff of the agency, and afterwards presented to IQAA's stakeholders to receive their feedback. Finally, the Accreditation Council approves the standards, regulations, or criteria.

According to the SAR, IQAA intends to develop its methodology of institutional and programme accreditation in accordance with the ESG and also other international standards.

Due to the changes in the national legislation and ENQA recommendations the guides of IQAA have been adapted a number of times since the last review. For example, in 2017, initial accreditation was introduced and the standard about Student Centred Learning was strengthened; in 2020 a new criteria about academic integrity was added. In all the cases the opinions of higher educational institutions, students and experts were gathered through seminars or surveys.

The external quality assurance processes are defined in the following guidelines:

- Standards and criteria for institutional accreditation of higher educational institutions
- Standards and criteria for programme accreditation of higher educational institutions
- Standards and criteria for accreditation of the third cycle (doctoral studies) educational programmes
- Standards and criteria for cross-border institutional accreditation
- Standards and criteria for cross-border programme accreditation

These methodologies apply for universities and research institutes.

These guidelines explain the standards and criteria with detail, but not the objectives of the process, the possible results of the process.

Also, following the recommendation from the previous review the agency has established the Regulations on post - accreditation monitoring.

In order to reduce the costs of accreditation for higher education institutions, if there are many educational programmes, they can be combined into clusters based on their scientific fields or to form a cluster of programmes provided on different levels (bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies).

About the 2017 recommendations:

1. The preliminary review process was deemed no longer necessary and removed from the accreditation process
2. The post-accreditation monitoring was redesigned and analysis of educational institutions' activities was removed from it.

## **Analysis**

The documents available to the panel do not predefine any specific mechanism explaining the internal process for designing and updating the methodologies. For example, it is not explained which department is responsible for this task, also how consultations on newly developed or revised methodologies are done, or how the feed-back and opinion from stakeholders arrive to the Accreditation Council. In the view of the panel, documents describing the procedures for revising existing and developing new methodologies should be drawn up and integrated in the IQAA Manual (ESG 3.6).

In initial accreditation, the agency has not elaborated standards and criteria for this process. The standards for periodical accreditation are used. as the processes are quite similar. However, the panel finds it important to develop standards and processes for initial accreditation independently in order to make all accreditation processes fit for purpose. The panel therefore recommends that IQAA define and approve separate standards and criteria for initial accreditation.

Looking at some standards, for example: *Guideline for organising and conducting an external review (audit) in the framework of institutional and program accreditation in hybrid and remote form*, or *Standards and criteria for accreditation of the third cycle programmes*, or *Regulations on decision-making concerning program accreditation* where there are no time references, the panel recommends that all the standards, guidelines or regulations should include a date of approval and the date from which the document applies.

During the interviews it was made evident that IQAA has periodic meetings with HEIs, employers, and students. IQAA has periodic meetings with the government, too. These meetings concern general issues about external quality assurance processes and requirements. HEIs, stakeholders and the government see IQAA as a reference of reforms in the higher education in Kazakhstan.

Although the procedures for designing methodologies are not well describe, the panel considers that IQAA in practice develops its external quality assurance standards and criteria for institutional and programme accreditation in an open and targeted way, whereall documents have been agreed in a process involving the different stakeholders.

### **Panel recommendations**

The panel recommends formally establishing the internal processes to develop, review and update standards and criteria, including defining the internal and external stakeholders involved in the processes.

The panel recommends to include the date of the approval to central documents and the date from which the document applies.

The panel recommends that IQAA define and approve seperate standards and criteria for initial accreditation.

### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

The panel suggests introducing the purpuse and objectives of each process and the possible results in all the standards and criteria for accreditation of higher education institutions.

### **Panel conclusion: substantially 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

### **2017 review recommendation**

The panel recommends that, for greater clarity, IQAA amend its regulations on programme accreditation so that they refer more explicitly to the compulsory status of post-accreditation monitoring and define more precisely its scope.

### **Evidence**

External quality assurance procedures in IQAA are different types of institutional and programme accreditation. The goal of these procedures is the continuous improvement of the activities of the educational organisation.

According to the SAR, institutional and academic programme accreditations, including initial accreditation, are all conducted in the following stages, which are described on the website and in the different guidelines on the organisation of accreditation procedures:

- 1<sup>st</sup> stage: preparation of the self-assessment report by the HEI
- 2<sup>nd</sup> stage: conducting an external accreditation, including a site visit

- 3<sup>rd</sup> stage: analysis of the report of the external expert group and consideration by the Accreditation Council
- 4<sup>th</sup> stage: post-accreditation monitoring (follow up).

Stage 1 - Preparation of the self-assessment: institutions write a report following the “*Guidelines for the preparation of self-assessment reports of educational institutions for institutional accreditation; for programme accreditation or for doctoral studies*”.

The main purpose of these Guidelines is to describe all stages of preparing self-assessment reports and detailed requirements for their writing and the appendices with statistical data that should be included.

This stage includes a technical analysis of the self-assessment report done by the IQAA coordinator. The coordinator can return a self-assessment if it does not comply with IQAA’s standardised format, if it has contextual, technical, structural, or other imperfections, or has unreliable data.

Stage 2 - External accreditation (Site-visit):

The IQAA has developed the *Guidelines on the organisation and conduct of an external review (audit) for institutional and programme accreditation*; these Guidelines are addressed to universities to prepare the external visit, for coordinators to organise the site visit and experts to review the requirements for the external visit.

This stage includes three main steps described in the Guidelines:

- Desk review – The expert panel conducts an intensive review of the self-evaluation and the package of respective documents submitted by the institution. Experts write out the missing information and issues that need to be clarified during the site visit.
- Site Visit – The expert panel pays a visit to check the institution on-site. The site visit lasts three days for institutional accreditation and two days for programme accreditation. The expert panel holds meetings with the leadership of the higher educational institution, heads of structural divisions, faculty, students, master’s and doctoral students, employers and graduates, a site visit of the higher education institution. In case of institutional accreditation, in addition to classrooms, it is necessary to visit canteens, hostels, sports facilities and other student recreation and leisure facilities. The experts also observe supporting documentation. Initial accreditation follows the same steps; the only difference is that graduates and employers do not participate in the external reviews, until the first graduation of students.
- Report production – The expert panel produces a report, which includes the analysis of the situation, commendations for the achievements and recommendations for further improvements. (See ESG 2.6). When preparing the external review report of the higher education institution undergoing reaccreditation, the review panel should consider the results of the previous accreditation. Higher education institutions check the reports for factual errors.

Stage 3 - Analysis of the report of the external expert group and consideration by the Accreditation Council

After a check by one of the seven expert councils, IQAA’s Accreditation Council decides regarding the granting or denial of accreditation status. (See ESG 2.5). Institutions can appeal the decision (See ESG 2.7).

Stage 4 - Post accreditation monitoring (Follow up)

In the Regulations on post-accreditation monitoring it is described that the institutions undergoing institutional or programme accreditation should submit a written report to IQAA every year on

achievements and developments that occurred during the year in maintaining the internal system of quality assurance. The report includes a plan of corrective actions for the implementation of the areas of improvement and elimination of comments. Institutions should highlight the compliance with follow-up while preparing the reports and analyse the effectiveness of the implemented actions.

According to the SAR, two-three years after a positive decision of the Accreditation Council, the agency conducts a visit to a number of higher educational institutions with a small team (coordinator, 1-2 experts from the initial external expert group, if possible), depending on the number of programmes. The duration of the visit is one day. This visit is not necessary for all higher education institutions. The site visits are usually paid to higher education institutions or educational programmes with more remarks or recommendations for improvement in the original review reports.

### **Analysis**

Regarding institutional accreditation, IQAA has carried out 61 institutional accreditations, and 1,528 programme accreditations from 2017 to 2021), all of them following the established phases. The panel finds that the review processes performed by IQAA are pre-defined, implemented consistently and published.

In the interviews, experts and institution representatives all agreed that the phases of the process are clear and well documented; also, the role of the coordinators was appreciated.

In the view of the panel it is a good practice that institutions have to submit a follow-up report and an improvement plan, in order to be monitored also after the decision on accreditation. Nevertheless, focusing on the Regulations on post - accreditation monitoring, this document does not explain what type of feedback the higher educational institutions can expect after sending the report to IQAA and who analyses it.

Another issue that is not well defined in the documentation is when IQAA decides to organise a follow-up site visit or not after two-three years. The panel discussed this with the management during the site visit, but without getting a clear understanding of the criteria. In addition, the SAR provides no information about how many programmes or institutions have had a follow-up visit. Therefore, the panel thinks that the recommendation from the last review mentioned above is not totally closed.

In the interview with the IQAA management team, the panel also learned that the reports of the expert groups on the implementation assessment (after a follow-up visit) are not published.

### **Panel recommendations**

The panel recommends improving the Regulations on post-accreditation monitoring (Follow up), in order to provide more clarity and information about the process, the annual reports, the site visit after two years, the role of the Accreditation Council, the consequences if the actions defined by the higher educational institutions are not well implemented.

### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

The panel suggests that when the follow up site visit needs to review standards where the role of the students are relevant, a student should be included in the reduced panel.

### **Panel conclusion: substantially 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).

### 2017 review recommendation

The panel encourages IQAA to consider providing international experts with additional training and/or materials on the national higher education and quality assurance context.

### Evidence

IQAA has a database with 1,935 experts, including 335 international experts. IQAA ensures that the members of the expert groups are competent and free from conflicts of interest. The Code of Ethics sets general standards of conduct according to generally accepted moral and ethical norms. All experts must sign it.

The database includes academics, students, and representatives of employers. The academics are proposed by the recommendations from Kazakhstan's higher educational institutions, also the accreditation committees make their suggestions for updating the existing database of experts by specialty. Employers are nominated by suggestions from professional associations and employers' unions. Regarding the students, higher educational institutions and the Alliance of Students of Kazakhstan provide the agency with a list of eligible students. International experts are selected based on the recommendations of partner accreditation agencies or on direct requests to faculties or departments of European higher educational institutions. On the website of IQAA there is the possibility to submit an application for candidates wishing to become IQAA external experts.

The candidates of experts are approved by the Accreditation Committee and then appointed by an order of the President of the Agency.

### Selection

The agency has different selection criteria for institutional accreditation and programme accreditation. This document is published in Russian, and the relevant information has been posted on the English part of the website, too.

### Training

In order to ensure the professional quality of the work of its external experts, IQAA regularly conducts training seminars, video conferences, webinars, and briefings on the accreditation procedure prior to the external evaluation. Participation in the training is a mandatory for all experts. The agency also develops various types of training materials, including manuals, videos, newsletters, thematic analysis, etc.

For international experts, the IQAA website contains a short description of higher education and higher education quality assurance in Kazakhstan. In the interviews the panel learned that all international experts have a large experience in quality assurance, and that they felt well informed about the Kazakhstani system. In addition, the agency provides services of interpreters to participate in reviews for experts that do not speak Russian.

Students follow a special training: Candidate students follow an initial training lasting between one and three days. The best students are selected to be part of the expert pool. The agency has produced a

Guideline for students designed to instruct student experts in the field of quality assurance of higher education, and on the procedures and standards of accreditation of IQAA.

### Composition

Expert teams for institutional accreditations are made up of five or seven members depending on the size of the higher educational institution evaluated. For programme accreditation the teams are composed of four members. All the teams must include student and employer representatives. All the panels include an international member as well, primarily academics from the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Baltic countries and Eastern European countries.

One member of each team is appointed as a head of the review panel who is responsible for preparing the program of the external review, the coordination of the panel members and for compiling the evaluation of the standards done by the team into a single report.

For each expert panel IQAA appoints a staff member as coordinator, who is responsible for the procedure and organisation of the accreditation process, but who is not a panel member and has no influence on accreditation, content of the report and decision-making process.

From the interviews, it was clearly established that all the experts are engaged in all the phases of the process.

### Experts' evaluation

The performance of the experts is evaluated at the end of the process by the coordinator and by the institution through a survey. This information helps in the selection of experts for future accreditations.

### **Analysis**

IQAA puts special attention on the selection of experts, in order to be competitive against other agencies operating in Kazakhstan.

In relation to the training, the panel could confirm that all the interviewed experts had an extensive knowledge of the evaluation processes and experience. The experts, including students and international experts, praised the support provided by IQAA and the utility of the guides and templates.

In relation to the composition of the panels, there is always a student in the panel, except in the follow-up visits. The panel considers it a good practice that IQAA includes international experts in all expert panels.

IQAA has established a rigorous mechanism to avoid the conflict of interest, including each expert's signing of a document of no-conflict of interest.

The evaluated institutions all expressed satisfaction with the competence and independence of the expert panels.

### **Panel commendations**

The panel commends IQAA for producing special guides for students. The Guideline for students is a good practice where basic principles of quality assurance are combined with the explanation of the processes in a friendly language.

### **Panel conclusion: fully 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.

### 2017 review recommendation

The panel recommends that IQAA (1) amend its Provision on decision-making of the IQAA Accreditation Council concerning institutional accreditation to explicitly authorise the Council to adjust algorithm-based ratings in justified cases (as is currently the case for programme accreditation); and (2) revise its guidelines for experts so that they define more precisely minimum requirements to be fulfilled or acceptable shortcomings for each of the four levels of compliance with its accreditation standards.

### Evidence

According to the SAR, IQAA's external review panels draw conclusions about higher educational institutions' and/or educational programmes' degree of compliance with the standards and criteria of IQAA. The conclusions are based on self-assessment reports, documents of the higher educational institution, interviews with management, teaching staff and employees, students, graduates and employers, visual reviews. Each criterion is evaluated based on the IQAA ranking scale: full compliance, significant compliance, partial compliance, and non-compliance.

In order to ensure that the level of compliance of each criteria is interpreted consistently by the experts, IQAA has prepared two documents: *Recommendations for external evaluation (audit) experts within the framework of program accreditation or within the framework of institutional accreditation (Guidelines for grouping the remarks made during external reviews)*. These documents contain the rubrics, where for each criteria is defined in detail the requirements for each of the four levels of compliance, so that it is possible to identify the difference between each level of compliance. The expert panels write a report containing their assessments on each of the criteria. The panels do not make an overall recommendation about accreditation. This procedure was confirmed by the experts interviewed during the site visit.

The Accreditation Council is the body responsible for decision-making. The Accreditation Council analyses the external review report, as well as the self-assessment report and additional materials if requested by it, to make its decisions.

The Accreditation Council makes decisions based on the *Regulations on decision-making of the IQAA Accreditation Council (Programme and Institutional)*. These documents contain an approximate algorithm (scoring) for making a decision on accreditation. The assessments of the expert panels are transformed into an overall score. Intervals for accreditation decisions based on the overall score are also defined in the document. In the interviews with management and members of the Accreditation Council, it became clear that the council may make decisions on the individual criteria that differ from the assessments of external expert panels if there is additional information about the higher educational institution or the evaluative judgments of experts are biased. Following the recommendation from the 2017 ENQA review, the *Regulation on decision-making of the IQAA Accreditation Council*, concerning institutional accreditation, explicitly authorises the Council to adjust algorithm-based ratings in justified cases.

The decision by the Accreditation Council could be either:



Not accredited if at least one of its standards received a judgment “Non-compliance”.

Accredited for 7 years: if institutions or programmes demonstrate outstanding achievements and positive practices.

Accredited for 5 years: if institutions or programmes demonstrate full compliance in most of the standards

Accredited for 2 years if the programmes or institutions have some standards with the judgement “partial compliance”.

IQAA has related intervals of score points to the different outcomes based on the expert panels’ assessment of the different standards.

In November 2020, conditional accreditation of educational institutions and educational programmes was cancelled, and the possibility of accreditation for 2 years was introduced instead.

### **Analysis**

The panel found that the decision processes for programme and institutional accreditation are well known by the external experts as well as by the institutions. The experts interviewed commented that the criteria are applied consistently and correctly. During the site visit, nobody complained about differences in the application of the criteria.

In the interview with members of the Accreditation Council, the panel got an understanding of the decision-making process that supported the view that the criteria are interpreted in a consistent way and that the decisions are based on all the evidence presented.

The panel could establish that the documents *Recommendations for external evaluation (audit) experts* used by experts and *the Regulations on decision-making of the IQAA Accreditation Council* are not made public. The institutional representatives interviewed commented that these documents are not known by them. Nevertheless, no institutions has yet complained about the process of decision-making, and as will be explained later (ESG 2.7), IQAA has only received two appeals in five years.

The IQAA process for decision-making implies that the expert panels cannot make a proposal about the decision of the accreditation. In the opinion of the panel, as the expert panel are the persons who have analysed and evaluated the programme or institution with more detail and due to their experience, they should have the possibility to make a proposal about the final decision, that the Accreditation Council can accept or not.

The Accreditation Council uses the document *Regulations on decision-making of the IQAA Accreditation Council* to make a decision. The panel observed that all the criteria have equal weight in the final decision. The panel considers this to be a too mechanical approach, and therefore the Accreditation Council should analyse if all the criteria have the same importance and weight in the decision-making process.

### **Panel recommendations**

The panel considers that the documents *Regulations on decision-making of the IQAA Accreditation Council* and *Recommendations for external evaluation (audit) experts* should be made public so that they are known by higher educational institutions that have or are planning to undergo an accreditation process.

### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

The panel suggests that the agency could consider the possibility that experts' panels could propose a decision on accreditation - or at least that each panel should be informed about what type of overall outcome its assessments of the individual criteria will lead to when using the scoring algorithm.

The panel suggests that the Accreditation Council reflects on the relative importance of each criteria when making the decisions on accreditation.

**Panel conclusion: substantially 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.

### 2017 review recommendation

The panel recommends that IQAA (1) amend its regulations so that they state explicitly that accreditation review reports are published on its website regardless of the final outcome of a review; and (2) accordingly, publish all review reports and related decisions of the Accreditation Council at least on its main website. IQAA may also consider the value of publishing summaries in English of all accreditation review reports, including those leading to conditional accreditation and non-accreditation, on its English-language website.

### Evidence

The Chair of the expert panel is responsible for writing the report after the site visit, with the contributions of all the panel members. IQAA provides the experts with a template for institutional accreditation and programme accreditation. Final versions of external reports are agreed upon by all review panel members and submitted to IQAA's coordinators. The coordinator has the responsibility to check that the report follows IQAA's procedure.

After the coordinator has checked the report, the draft report is sent to the institution to be checked for factual inaccuracies. If higher educational institutions provide comments/objections on external reports, chairs of review panels, in consultation with other members of the panel, make revisions or provide substantiated rebuttals to the comments. If all panel members agree with the assessments contained in the report, this will be made final. The report is then sent to the relevant one of IQAA's seven experts councils, who reviews the technical facts, checks the data from the higher education institution, and checks the consistency in order to reduce subjectivity in the assessments. After checking and reviewing reports, the members of the expert council prepare a summary report that outlines the main points provided in the external reports of review panels for the Accreditation Council. The expert council cannot change any conclusion, recommendation, or comment in the report. If the expert council finds any inaccuracy, then it contacts the IQAA coordinator, who gets in touch with the expert panel.

Once this process is closed the reports go to the Accreditation Council who takes the formal accreditation decision.

The review panel was provided with a set of reports in English before the site visit, all of them following the same specific format for organising the content of the report.

The IQAA review reports include:

- An introduction to the basic data of the study programme or institution under review;
- A table with the level of compliance for each standard;
- The main component of the report: the analysis of each standard that includes evidence, analysis, positive practice, remarks, areas of improvement;
- Conclusions;
- Some appendices – site visit programme, list of participants, list of documents.

The reports and the formal accreditation decisions based on them are published on the website of IQAA and in the DEQAR Database.

During the site visit, the review panel made some comments about some difficulties in searching for reports on IQAA's website. Quickly after these comments were made (still during the site visit), IQAA improved the extended search functionality so that the reports could be easily found. The extended search functionality makes it possible to customise search queries by the names of higher educational institutions or educational programmes, the accreditation type (programme and institutional) and organisation type.

During the site visit, higher educational institutions expressed satisfaction with the quality of the expert reports. The Accreditation Council representatives were positive about the quality of IQAA's reports as well. In general, these reports were considered a sufficient base for an accreditation decision by the interviewed council members.

### **Analysis**

In the opinion of the panel, the agency has made very good progress since the last review; both recommendations have been carried out.

After reviewing some reports, the panel confirms that the structure of the reports, as well as the systematic process used in drafting them, is well defined and explained in the documentation accompanying the agency's procedures. The conditions and recommendations are clearly marked as such in the reports. Therefore, the panel considers the reports to be clear and understandable to the general academic community and stakeholders.

Looking at the website and the reports provided the panel learned that:

- All reports from the programme and the institutional accreditation are published in full, including those that resulted in a negative decision and cross-border accreditations.
- The follow up reports, also named post-accreditation monitoring (PAM), and those from initial accreditation are still not published on the website.
- Although they are a minority, some reports from institutional accreditation of research institutes are not published in full.
- Although the agency has taken on board the suggestion made by the review panel to publish summary reports in English, currently not all the reports written in Russian have summary reports in English, as the agency does not have enough resources to implement it. However, the agency aims to publish more summary reports in English on the website in the future.

### **Panel recommendations**

IQAA should publish reports from initial accreditations and from post accreditation monitoring (Follow up).

IQAA should publish full reports for the research institutions accreditations.

### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

The panel recommends IQAA to develop report templates for all the processes, including initial accreditations and post-accreditation monitoring (Follow up).

**Panel conclusion: substantially 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.

### Evidence

Higher educational institutions undergoing accreditation have the right to express their disagreement or objections.

According to the SAR, IQAA allows the institutions two different possibilities: to appeal or complain.

- The institutions can appeal if they do not agree with the decision of the Accreditation Council.
- The institutions can complain if they disagree or they are dissatisfied with the actions or code of conduct of external review panel members or coordinators of the agency, about the inaccuracy of information, or in “factual/logical errors”.

To deal with these issues, there are two independent bodies in the organisational structure of the agency: the Complaints Commission and the Appeals Commission. Both bodies are described in Section IQAA Organisation of this report.

Each complaint or appeal by a higher educational institution goes through an in-depth review and decision-making process. The appeals process is described in the procedure *Regulations on the appeals commission* and the complaints process is described in the procedure *Regulations on the procedure of considering complaints*. Both documents are published on the website of IQAA.

### About appeals:

Within two weeks after receiving an IQAA informational letter on the results of the Accreditation Council’s meeting, an institution may appeal to the Appeals Commission against the Accreditation Council’s decision. It is, only possible to appeal if the institution or programme has received a decision of the Accreditation Council “Not to accredit”. In other words, it is not possible to appeal the validity time of a positive accreditation. Within a month after receipt of an appeal from a higher education institution, the Appeals Commission considers whether there are any “Violations of the accreditation procedure” and/or “Factual/logical errors”.

Formation of the appeal decision is based on the analysis and discussion of the materials presented for consideration (a self-evaluation report, an external review report made by the expert group, the IQAA conclusion for the Accreditation Council, and any additional material provided by an educational institution)

The decision on the appeal may be of two types: "Appeal accepted" or "Appeal rejected."

In case of a decision “Appeal accepted”, the Appeals Commission may give a recommendation to the Accreditation Council to change the decision or to appoint an additional expert group for a second visit (if there is a violation of the accreditation procedure) or for re-examination of the documents (if there are factual/logical errors) in accordance with the document “Decision on the appeal”. The

conclusions made by the additional expert group are submitted for consideration to the Accreditation Council.

Until now IQAA has received two appeals. Both have been rejected.

#### About complaints:

Institutions can send a complaint in a free format. The Complaint Commission after a formal review of the content of the complaint, can accept or reject it, if the complaint does not follow the Regulations. If the complaint is accepted, the Commission should investigate what has happened. For verifying the complaint, it could be possible to organise a visit to the higher education institution.

IQAA has not received any complaints in the five-year period between 2017 and 2021.

#### **Analysis**

The process of appeals is clearly described in the regulations. The process is known by the higher educational institutions.

However, the panel considers that the process of appeals established by IQAA cannot cover all the potential reasons for filing an appeal. The regulations only allow institutions to appeal if the result is “Not accredited”, but not in case of a positive accreditation where an institution wants to appeal against the accreditation period, which is also a decision taken by the Accreditation Council.

The complaint procedure is described in the regulations. The panel considers that given that a complaint is about factual/logical errors or behaviour of the panel, the process seems quite complex. For example, there is a possibility to organise a visit to the institutions, but the panel does not see the utility of it due to what is considered a complaint. Also, the regulations only explain what will happen if the complaint is about the behaviour of an expert, but not what will happen if the Complaints Commission accepts that there are factual/logical errors or lack of information.

To sum up, the existence of an appeal and complaint procedure and its implementation have been considered as positive by the panel. There is no doubt that the aim of the agency is to include the process of appeals or complaints in the accreditation procedures. Nevertheless, the panel considers that IQAA should reflect on both processes and how the information gathered from appeals, complaints and informal feedback is used in order to improve the processes.

#### **Panel recommendations**

The Appeals Regulations should include the possibility to appeal all elements in the decisions of the Accreditation Council.

#### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

The agency should reflect on the complexity of the complaint process.

#### **Panel conclusion: substantially compliant**

# ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

## COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

During the review and in this report the competitive environment where the agency is working has been several times cited. It is true, that in Kazakhstan there are 11 agencies seeking to do as many accreditations as possible. Nevertheless, the new regulation about the compliance with ESG for all the agencies that want to do accreditation in Kazakhstan perhaps will reduce this stress. In the future, although the competitive environment will never disappear, IQAA would lead an association of Kazakhstan quality agencies and work together to improve the quality of the higher educational institutions, for example, sharing knowledge, or producing thematic analyses together.

## LEADERSHIP

In all the meetings with external stakeholders, the panel met identical statements about the good reputation, knowledge and professional expertise of the president of IQAA. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the panel, this great strength of IQAA could also turn into a weakness in the long term. IQAA could therefore consider the possibilities to evolve the organisation in a way so that it would become less dependent on the president as a person. This could for instance be relevant in cases where the president should need a replacement, either for a shorter or longer period of time, or if the president should choose to leave the management of IQAA to a successor on a more permanent basis. Today, the Supervisory Board has not the leadership to manage the agency alone, and the Supervisory Board is not designed to take on any executive powers. The introduction of a vice-president could be one among other options to ensure continuity and that the knowledge and experience of the president – and hence the positive image of IQAA – will not be personalised to the same extent as today.

# CONCLUSION

## SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

The panel commends IQAA for:

### 3.1

The panel member emphasizes the role of the agency in the country to promote quality culture and the ESG among the higher educational institutions.

### 3.3

The panel highlights IQAA for its good reputation, as well as its ability to maintain high standards of quality in spite of the competitive environment in which it works.

### 2.4

The panel commends IQAA for producing special guides for students. The Guideline for students is a good practice where basic principles of quality assurance are combined with the explanation of the processes in a friendly language.

## OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Part 3:

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE – Substantially compliant

ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS – Fully compliant

ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE – Fully compliant

ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS – Partially compliant

ESG 3.5 RESOURCES – Fully compliant

ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT – Substantially compliant

ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES – Fully compliant

Part 2:

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE – Substantially compliant

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE – Substantially compliant

ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES – Substantially compliant

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS – Fully compliant

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES – Substantially compliant

ESG 2.6 REPORTING – Substantially compliant

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS – Substantially compliant

### 3.1

The panel recommends that IQAA develops a more guiding “Strategic development of IQAA” with goals and objectives defined in more detail, and supplemented by qualitative and quantitative indicators, which can be reflected in the annual work plans and translated into the daily work of the agency and be subject to periodical monitoring and assessment.

The panel also recommends that the annual follow-up of the “Strategic development of IQAA” and the annual work plans should be formally documented in internal reports with clear learning points.

### 3.4

IQAA should develop a strategic approach to identifying potential thematic subjects for analyses and establish a calendar in the future in order to publish thematic reports with regular intervals.

IQAA should distinguish more clearly between thematic analyses and other types of analyses that have to be considered as a part of the internal quality assurance of the agency.

### 3.6

The panel recommends developing the internal quality system. It is necessary that the agency ensures that the cycle of continuous improvement is complete. For example, with the incorporation of indicators that measures the processes, introducing measurable objectives of the Strategic development and annual plans, managing a plan of improvement actions.

### 2.2

The panel recommends formally establishing the internal processes to develop, review and update standards and criteria, including defining the internal and external stakeholders involved in the processes.

The panel recommends to include the date of the approval to central documents and the date from which the document applies.

The panel recommends that IQAA define and approve separate standards and criteria for initial accreditation.

### 2.3

The panel recommends improving the Regulations on post-accreditation monitoring (follow up), in order to provide more clarity and information about the process, the annual reports, the site visit after two years, the role of the Accreditation Council, the consequences if the actions defined by the higher educational institutions are not well implemented.

### 2.5

The panel considers that the documents Regulations on decision-making of the IQAA Accreditation Council and Recommendations for external evaluation (audit) experts should be made public so that they are known by higher educational institutions that have or are planning to undergo an accreditation process.

### 2.6

IQAA should publish reports from initial accreditations and from post accreditation monitoring (follow up).

IQAA should publish full reports for the research institutions accreditations.

### 2.7

The Appeals Regulations should include the possibility to appeal all elements in the decisions of the Accreditation Council.



## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

### 3.5

The panel suggests elaborating a more strategic training plan where not only is included the participation in seminars, but also other formative activities in each area of work, such as technology, languages, analysis of data, economical management.

The panel suggests including objectives and strategic actions related to the finances in the strategic plan in order to reduce the impact or to mitigate the risk of a possible decrease in the number of accreditations.

### 2.1

The panel suggest IQAA to reflect on the criteria under each standard and to reduce the level of details and examples, in order to allow that each programme or higher educational institution could demonstrate their own ways to develop their activity or be innovative in their processes in fulfilment of standards.

### 2.2

The panel suggests introducing the purpose and objectives of each process and the possible results in all the standards and criteria for accreditation of higher education institutions.

### 2.3

The panel suggests that when the follow up site visit needs to review standards where the role of the students are relevant, a student should be included in the reduced panel.

### 2.5

The panel suggests that the agency could consider the possibility that experts' panels could propose a decision on accreditation - or at least that each panel should be informed about what type of overall outcome its assessments of the individual criteria will lead to when using the scoring algorithm.

The panel suggests that the Accreditation Council reflects on the relative importance of each criteria when making the decisions on accreditation.

### 2.6

The panel recommends IQAA to develop report templates for all the processes, including initial accreditations and post-accreditation monitoring (follow up).

### 2.7

The agency should reflect on the complexity of the complaint process.

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX I: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

4 OCTOBER 2021 (MONDAY)			
TIMING	MEETING N.	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
<b>CEST:</b> 8.30-9.00 <b>LT:</b> 9.30-10.00		<i>Connection set-up</i> Review panel's private meeting	
<b>CEST:</b> 9.00-9.15 <b>LT:</b> 10.00-10.15 <b>KZ:</b> 13.00-13.15		<i>Connection set-up</i>	
<b>CEST:</b> 9.15-10.00 <b>LT:</b> 10.15-11.00 <b>KZ:</b> 13.15-14.00	1	<b>Meeting with the IQAA President and the Heads of Departments</b>	<b>1. Sholpan Kalanova</b> President of IQAA, Professor, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Candidate of Chemical Sciences <b>2. Karlygash Jigitcheyeva</b> Head of the Department for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Research Institutes, Associate Professor, Candidate of Chemical Sciences <b>3. Janna Gabassova</b> Head of the Department for Reviewing External Reports and Post-Accreditation Monitoring, Associate Professor, Candidate of Technical Sciences <b>4. Dilara Orynassarova</b> Head of the Department of Analysis and Quality, PhD <b>5. Daulet Kalanov</b> Head of the Administrative and International Relations Department <b>6. Marzhan Ermanova</b> Head of the IT and Database Department
<b>CEST:</b> 10.00-10.15 <b>LT:</b> 11.00-11.15		<i>Connection set-up</i>	

<b>4 OCTOBER 2021 (MONDAY)</b>			
<b>KZ:</b> 14.00-14.15			
<b>CEST:</b> 10.15-11.00 <b>LT:</b> 11.15-12.00 <b>KZ:</b> 14.15-15.00	<b>2</b>	<b>Meeting with the IQAA team responsible for the preparation of the self-assessment report</b>	<b>1. Sholpan Kalanova</b> <b>President of IQAA, Professor, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Candidate of Chemical Sciences</b> <b>2. Karlygash Jigitcheyeva</b> <b>Head of the Department for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Research Institutes, Associate Professor, Candidate of Chemical Sciences</b> <b>3. Dilara Orynbassarova</b> <b>Head of the Department of Analysis and Quality, PhD</b> <b>4. Daulet Kalanov</b> <b>Head of the Administrative and International Relations Department</b> <b>5. Marzhan Ermanova</b> <b>Head of the IT and Database Department</b>
<b>CEST:</b> 11.00-11.20 <b>LT:</b> 12.00-12.20 <b>KZ:</b> 15.00-15.20		Break	
<b>CEST:</b> 11.20-11.30 <b>LT:</b> 12.20-12.30 <b>KZ:</b> 15.20-15.30		Connection set-up	
<b>CEST:</b> 11.30-12.15 <b>LT:</b> 12.30-13.15 <b>KZ:</b> 15.30-16.15	<b>3</b>	<b>Meeting with the Supervisory Board</b>	<b>1. Zhaksybek Kulekeyev</b> <b>Chairperson of the Supervisory Board of IQAA</b> <b>Advisor to the Director-General of the Research Institute of Mining and Drilling Technologies of the National Oil and Gas Company "KazMunaiGaz", Ex-Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan</b> <b>2. Maiki Udam</b> <b>Member of the Supervisory Board of IQAA</b> <b>PhD, Quality Manager, University of Tartu (Estonia)</b> <b>3. Gani Tasmagambetov</b> <b>Member of the Supervisory Board of IQAA</b> <b>General Director of "Avtobank" LLP, Nur-Sultan</b>
<b>CEST:</b> 12.15-12.30 <b>LT:</b> 13.15-13.30		Break	
<b>CEST:</b> 12.30-13.30 <b>LT:</b> 13.30-14.15		Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day II	

5 OCTOBER 2021 (TUESDAY)			
TIMING	MEETING N.	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
CEST: 8.15- 08.45 LT: 9.15-09.45		Review panel private meeting	
CEST: 8.45- 9.00 LT: 9.45-10.00 KZ: 12.45-13.00		Connection set-up	
CEST: 9.00-9.45 LT: 10.00-10.45 KZ: 13.00-13.45	4	Meeting with the IQAA Accreditation Council	<p><b>1. Sergey Udartsev</b>  <b>Professor, Doctor of Law, Chairperson of the Accreditation Council, Director of the Research Institute of Law Policy and Constitutional Legislation at Kazakh Humanities and Law University, Ex-Judge of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan</b></p> <p><b>2. Talgat Doskenov</b>  <b>Professor, Doctor of Economic Sciences, Deputy Chairperson of the Accreditation Council, Chairperson of the Committee of Social Sphere and Social Partnership, Member of the Presidium of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Atameken"</b></p> <p><b>3. Gennady Gamarnik</b>  <b>Professor, Doctor of Economic Sciences, Member of the Accreditation Council Member of the Public Council for Education and Science, Youth Affairs and Protection of Children's Rights under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Ex-First Vice-Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan</b></p> <p><b>4. Ieva Vaiciukevičienė (Lithuania)</b>  <b>Member of the Accreditation Council</b>  <b>Master of Law, Head of Legal and General Affairs Division, Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), Lithuania</b></p> <p><b>5. Yerkeblan Tazhbayev</b>  <b>Professor, Doctor of Chemical Sciences, Member of the Accreditation Council, Vice-Rector for Research of the "Academician E. A. Buketov Karagandy University"</b></p> <p><b>6. Nurken Gubashev</b>  <b>Member of the Accreditation Council</b>  <b>Doctor of Agricultural Sciences, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs of the Zhangir Kha West Kazakhstan Agrarian and Technical University</b></p> <p><b>7. Dauren Tleubaev</b>  <b>Member of the Accreditation Council - Student Representative</b>  <b>Master's Student of "Technical Physics" in the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University</b></p>

<b>CEST:</b> 9.45-10.00 <b>LT:</b> 10.45-11.00 <b>KZ:</b> 13.45-14.00		Connection set-up	
<b>CEST:</b> 10.00-10.45 <b>LT:</b> 11.00-11.45 <b>KZ:</b> 14.00-14.45	5	Meeting with Experts Council	<b>1. Olga Arinova</b> Candidate of Philosophical Sciences Professor the Department of Philosophy, Academician E.A. Buketov Karagandy University <b>2. Saule Kunyazova</b> Candidate of Economic Sciences Head of the Department of Economics, S. Toraihyrov Pavlodar University <b>3. Aizhamal Tulekbaeva</b> Candidate of Technical Sciences Head of the Department of Standardization and Certification, M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University <b>4. Mariya Minaidarova</b> Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Russian Language and Literature, M.Kh. Dulaty Taraz Regional University <b>5. Saira Zhienbaeva</b> Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogics and Psychology, Kazakh National Women's Pedagogical University <b>6. Gulsum Abzuldinova</b> Candidate of Philological Sciences Head of the Educational Programme "Russian Language and Literature", Pavlodar Pedagogical University <b>7. Galiya Rakhimova</b> Candidate of Technical Sciences Head of the Department of Construction Materials and Technologies, Karagandy State Technical University
<b>CEST:</b> 10.45-11.15 <b>LT:</b> 11.45-12.15 <b>KZ:</b> 14.45-15.15		Review panel's private discussion (and connection set-up for the coordinator)	
<b>CEST:</b> 11.15-11.30 <b>LT:</b> 12.15-12.30 <b>KZ:</b> 15.15-15.30		Connection set-up	
<b>CEST:</b> 11.30 -12.00 <b>LT:</b> 12.30-13.00 <b>KZ:</b> 15.30-16.00	6	Meeting with the IQAA Appeals Commission and Complaints Commission	<b>1. Ernar Begaliev</b> Member of the Appeals Committee of IQAA Professor of the Department of Special Legal Disciplines, Doctor of Law, Academy of Law Enforcement Agencies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan <b>2. Sholpan Tlepina</b> Member of the Appeals Committee of IQAA

			<p>Head of the Department of International Law of the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University</p> <p>3. Lyazzat Yerkinbayeva Member of the Appeals Committee of IQAA Doctor of Law, Professor of the Department of Customs, Financial and Environmental Law, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University</p> <p>4. Kaliya Sartaeva Member of the Appeals Committee of IQAA Candidate of Law, Associate Professor of the Department of "Criminal Procedure and Criminalistics", M.O. Auezov South Kazakhstan University</p> <p>5. Gulzada Khusainova Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, PhD, Member of the IQAA Complaints Commission, Head of the Department "Music Education" of the Kazakh National University of Arts</p> <p>6. Rylash Turchekenova Candidate of Economic Sciences, Member of the IQAA Complaints Commission, Director of the Institute of Management, Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan</p>
<p>CEST: 12.00-12.15 LT: 13.00-13.15 KZ: 16.00-16.15</p>		Connection set-up	
<p>CEST: 12.15-13.00 LT: 13.15-14.00 KZ: 16.15-17.00</p>	7	Meeting with IQAA staff	<p>1. Aisulu Khalitova Chief Expert, PhD, Department for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Research Institutes</p> <p>2. Janar Khissimova Senior Expert, Department for Reviewing of External Reports and Post-Accreditation Monitoring</p> <p>3. Dana Maksutova Senior Coordinator, Department for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Research Institutes</p> <p>4. Nazerke Kaymoldina Senior Expert, IT and Database Department</p> <p>5. Bakhyt Sakpanova Chief Accountant, Administrative and International Relations Department</p> <p>6. Dana Kalmurzayeva Lawyer, Administrative and International Relations Department</p> <p>7. Karlygash Masteyeva Administrator</p>
<p>CEST: 13.00-13.30 LT: 14.00-14.30</p>		Wrap-up meeting among panel members: preparation for day III	

6 OCTOBER 2021 (WEDNESDAY)			
TIMING	MEETING N.	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
CEST: 8.15- 08.45 LT: 9.15-09.45		Review panel private meeting	
CEST: 8.45- 9.00 LT: 9.45-10.00 KZ: 12.45-13.00		Connection set-up	
CEST: 9.00-9.45 LT: 10.00-10.45 KZ: 13.00-13.45	8	Meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan	<p>1. Gulzat Kobenova Associate Professor, Candidate of Historical Sciences Chairperson of the Committee on Quality Assurance in the Field of Education and Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan</p> <p>2. Gulzhan Dzharasova Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Quality Assurance in Education and Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan</p> <p>3. Aigul Zhumabayeva Deputy of the Majilis (Lower Chamber) of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Deputy Chairperson of the National Industrial Chamber of the Republic of Kazakhstan Member of the IQAA Supervisory Board</p>
CEST: 9.45-10.00 LT: 10.45-11.00 KZ: 13.45-14.00		Connection set-up	
CEST: 10.00-10.45 LT: 11.00-11.45 KZ: 14.00-14.45	9	Meeting with Heads of reviewed HEIs/HEI representatives	<p>1. Darkhan Biyalov Rector of the Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, PhD</p> <p>2. Askar Nametov Doctor of Veterinary Sciences Rector of the Zhangir Khan West-Kazakhstan Agrarian Technical University</p> <p>3. Maratbek Gabdullin Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, PhD Rector of the Kazakh-British Technical University</p> <p>4. Gulzhan Sugirbaeva Candidate of Historical sciences</p>

6 OCTOBER 2021 (WEDNESDAY)			
			<p>Rector of the South-Kazakhstan State Pedagogical University</p> <p>5. Irina Rovnyakova Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Vice-Rector for Strategic Development and Research, S. Amanzholov East Kazakhstan University</p> <p>6. Bakhyt Zhautikov Doctor of Technical Sciences, Professor, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs of the Satpayev Kazakh National Research Technical University</p> <p>7. Baurzhan Nurakhmetov Doctor of Technical Sciences, Professor, First Vice-Rector of Almaty Technological University</p>
<p><b>CEST:</b> 10.45-11.15 <b>LT:</b> 11.45-12.15 <b>KZ:</b> 14.45-15.15</p>		Break	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 11.15-11.30 <b>LT:</b> 12.15-12.30 <b>KZ:</b> 15.15-15.30</p>		Review panel's private discussion <i>(and connection set-up for the coordinator)</i>	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 11.30-11.45 <b>LT:</b> 12.30-11.45 <b>KZ:</b> 15.30-15.45</p>		Connection set-up	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 11.45-12.30 <b>LT:</b> 12.45-13.30 <b>KZ:</b> 15.45-16.30</p>	10	Meeting with quality assurance officers of HEIs	<p>1. Bakhytgul Abdizhapparova Candidate of Technical Sciences, Head of the Department of Accreditation, M.O. Auezov South Kazakhstan University</p> <p>2. Gulnara Rysmagambetova Candidate of Law, Vice-Rector for Strategic Planning, "Bolashaq" Academy</p> <p>3. Aleftina Bakhtaulova Candidate of Biological Sciences, Vice-Rector for Research, I. Zhansyurov Zhetysu University</p>



**6 OCTOBER 2021 (WEDNESDAY)**

			<p><b>4. Zhanna Akhmadieva</b> Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Deputy Director of the High School of Education, Astana International University</p> <p><b>5. Diana Amirbekova</b> Managing Director for Internationalization and Strategic Development Department, Kazakh-British Technical University</p> <p><b>6. Saule Zagatova</b> Candidate of Philological Sciences Director of the Department of Academic Affairs and Accreditation, Eurasian Humanities Institute</p> <p><b>7. Farida Abdoldina</b> Candidate of Technical Sciences Head of the Methodological Unit, Department of Academic Affairs, International IT University</p>
<p><b>CEST:</b> 12.30-12.45 <b>LT:</b> 13.30-13.45 <b>KZ:</b> 16.30-16.45</p>		<p><i>Connection set-up</i></p>	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 12.45-13.30 <b>LT:</b> 13.45-14.30 <b>KZ:</b> 16.45-17.30</p>	<p>11</p>	<p><b>Meeting with IQAA national experts (incl. academic experts, and employers)</b></p>	<p><b>1. Rinat Iskakov</b> Doctor of Chemical Sciences, Associate Professor, Satpayev Kazakh National Research Technical University</p> <p><b>2. Timur Umarov</b> Vice-Rector for Academic and Educational Affairs at the International IT University</p> <p><b>3. Anar Makhmetova</b> Candidate of Technical Sciences, Associate Professor,</p>

6 OCTOBER 2021 (WEDNESDAY)			
			<p><b>Vice-Rector for Educational and Methodological Work at the University of International Business</b></p> <p><b>4. Akmaral Kadyrova</b></p> <p>Candidate of Economic Sciences, Professor at the Department of Economics, Toraighyrov Pavlodar University</p> <p><b>5. Bolat Aitimov</b></p> <p>PhD, Head of the Department of Criminal Law Disciplines, I. Zhansyurov Zhetysu State University</p> <p><b>6. Zhangazy Moldamuratov</b></p> <p>PhD, Associate Professor, Head of the Department "Construction and Production of Materials", M.Kh. Dulaty Taraz Regional University</p>
<b>CEST:</b> 13.30-14.15 <b>LT:</b> 14.30-15.15		Lunch	
<b>CEST:</b> 14.15-15.15 <b>LT:</b> 15.15-16.15		Wrap-up meeting among panel members; preparation for day IV	

7 OCTOBER 2021 (THURSDAY)			
TIMING		TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
<b>CEST:</b> 8.15- 08.45 <b>LT:</b> 9.15-09.45		Review panel private meeting	
<b>CEST:</b> 8.45- 9.00 <b>LT:</b> 9.45-10.00 <b>KZ:</b> 12.45-13.00		Connection set-up	
<b>CEST:</b> 9.00-9.45 <b>LT:</b> 10.00-10.45 <b>KZ:</b> 13.00-13.45	12	Meeting with IQAA students experts	I. AseI Ibraimova

7 OCTOBER 2021 (THURSDAY)			
			<p>PhD student (3<sup>rd</sup> year) in Information Systems, International IT University</p> <p>2. Daniyar Temirov</p> <p>Bachelor's degree student (4<sup>th</sup> year) in Chemistry-Biology, Academician E.A. Buketov Karagandy University</p> <p>3. Islam Abdullaev</p> <p>Bachelor's degree student (3<sup>rd</sup> year) in Marketing University of International Business</p> <p>4. Margarita Bondar</p> <p>Master's degree student (2<sup>nd</sup> year) in Pedagogics and Psychology, I. Zhansyurov Zhetysu University</p> <p>5. Aliyev Emin Farid oglu</p> <p>Master student of the Institute of Catalysis and Inorganic Chemistry of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan (ANAS)</p>
<p><b>CEST:</b> 9.45-10.00 <b>LT:</b> 10.45-11.00 <b>KZ:</b> 13.45-14.00</p>		Connection set-up	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 10.00-10.45 <b>LT:</b> 11.00-11.45 <b>KZ:</b> 14.00-14.45</p>	13	Meeting with representatives of employers and other external stakeholders	<p>1. Rysty Karabaeva</p> <p>Counselor, Eurasian Association of Tourism, Nur-Sultan</p> <p>2. Natalya Nekrasova</p> <p>Executive Director of the Union of Project Managers of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty</p> <p>3. Erbol Aitbayev</p> <p>Vice-President of "Kazakhstan Highway Research Institute" JSC</p> <p>4. Kuantkan Zhabagin</p>

7 OCTOBER 2021 (THURSDAY)			
			<p>Deputy Director of the Semey Center for Nuclear Medicine and Oncology</p> <p>5. Elina Pauli</p> <p>Deputy Director of the Youth Research Center, Master of Arts in Philosophy</p> <p>6. Miraim Atanayeva</p> <p>Vice-President of "Information-Analytical Centre", Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan</p> <p>7. Amantay Nurmagambetov</p> <p>Advisor to the Director of the Centre for the Bologna Process and Academic Mobility, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Doctor of Political Science, Professor</p>
<p><b>CEST:</b> 10.45-11.00 <b>LT:</b> 11.45-12.15 <b>KZ:</b> 14.45-15.15</p>		Break	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 11.15-12.00 <b>LT:</b> 12.15-13.00 <b>KZ:</b> 15.15-16.00</p>		Wrap-up meeting among panel members: preparation	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 11.45-12.00 <b>LT:</b> 12.45-13.00 <b>KZ:</b> 15.45-16.00</p>		Connection set-up	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 12.00-12.30 <b>LT:</b> 13.00-13.30 <b>KZ:</b> 16.00-16.30</p>	14	Meeting with IQAA international experts	<p>1. Marko Marhl (Slovenia)</p> <p>Professor, Doctor of Sciences, Head of the Educational Center for Continuing Education, Faculty of Education, University of Maribor</p> <p>2. Mieczyslaw W. Socha (Poland)</p>

**7 OCTOBER 2021 (THURSDAY)**

			<p><b>Member of the Advisory Board of the Polish Accreditation Committee, Habilitated Doctor, Warsaw, Poland</b></p> <p><b>3. Dovile Gailiute-Janusone (Lithuania)</b>  <b>Vice-Dean for International Relations and Studies, Law School,</b>  <b>Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania</b></p> <p><b>4. Natalja Gurvits (Estonia)</b>  <b>Doctor of Philosophy in Economy and Finances,</b>  <b>Associate Professor, Tallinn University of Technology</b></p> <p><b>5. Rünno Lõhmus (Estonia)</b>  <b>Doctor of Philosophy in Physics, University of Tartu</b></p> <p><b>6. Maija Burima (Latvia)</b>  <b>Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Professor, Doctor of Philology, Daugavpils University, Latvia</b></p> <p><b>7. Vladimir Potapchuk (Russia)</b>  <b>Candidate of Philosophical Sciences, Associate Professor, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia</b></p>
<p><b>CEST:</b> 12.30-12.45  <b>LT:</b> 13.30-13.45  <b>KZ:</b> 16.30-16.45</p>		<p><i>Connection set-up</i></p>	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 12.45-13.15  <b>LT:</b> 13.45-14.15  <b>KZ:</b> 16.45-17.15</p>	<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>Meeting with the IQAA President and liaison persons to clarify any pending issues</b></p>	<p><b>1. Sholpan Kalanova</b>  <b>President of IQAA, Professor, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Candidate of Chemical Sciences</b></p> <p><b>2. Karlygash Jigitcheyeva</b>  <b>Head of the Department for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Research Institutes, Associate Professor, Candidate of Chemical Sciences</b></p>

7 OCTOBER 2021 (THURSDAY)			
			<p>3. Dilara Orynassarova Head of the Department of Analysis and Quality, PhD</p> <p>4. Daulet Kalanov Head of the Administrative and International Relations Department</p>
<p><b>CEST:</b> 13.15-13.30 <b>LT:</b> 14.15-14.30</p>		Wrap-up meeting among panel members; preparation for day V	

8 October 2021 (Friday)			
TIMING		TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
<p><b>CEST:</b> 09.00-12.00 <b>LT:</b> 10.00-13.00</p>		Private meeting among panel members to agree on the main findings	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 12.00-12.15 <b>LT:</b> 13.00-13.15 <b>KZ:</b> 16.00-16.15</p>		<i>Connection set-up</i>	
<p><b>CEST:</b> 12.15-13.00 <b>LT:</b> 13.15-14.00 <b>KZ:</b> 16.15-17.00</p>	16	Final de-briefing meeting with the IQAA President, Management Team and key staff of the agency to inform about preliminary findings	<p>1. Sholpan Kalanova President of IQAA, Professor, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Candidate of Chemical Sciences</p> <p>2. Karlygash Jigitcheyeva Head of the Department for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Research Institutes, Associate Professor, Candidate of Chemical Sciences</p> <p>3. Janna Gabassova Head of the Department for Reviewing External Reports and Post-Accreditation Monitoring, Associate Professor, Candidate of Technical Sciences</p> <p>4. Dilara Orynassarova Head of the Department of Analysis and Quality, PhD</p> <p>5. Daulet Kalanov</p>

8 October 2021 (Friday)

**Head of the Administrative and International  
Relations Department**

**6. Marzhan Ermanova**

**Head of the IT and Database Department**

## **ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW**

### **External review of the Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)**

#### **TRIPARTITE TERMS OF REFERENCE BETWEEN IQAA, ENQA AND EQAR** **27 November 2020**

##### **I. Background and context**

The Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA) was established in 2008 as the first independent accreditation agency in Kazakhstan. The Non-Governmental Institution «Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education» has the legal status as a non-governmental, non-profit organisation. IQAA's mission is to contribute to improving the quality of educational institutions, and to increase their competitiveness at national and international levels. IQAA conducts accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes, organises trainings and conferences in the field of quality assurance in higher education, publishes reports and provides information about quality assurance in higher education to stakeholders in Kazakhstan and abroad.

IQAA's activities:

- Organisation and carrying out of institutional and programme accreditation of higher education institutions and research institutes;
- Organisation and carrying out of institutional and programme accreditation of TVET institutions and of institutional accreditation of continuous education centres;
- Development of standards and criteria, guides and other relevant documents for institutional and programme accreditation of higher education institutions and research institutes;
- Development of standards and criteria, guides and other relevant documents for institutional and programme accreditation of TVET institutions and for institutional accreditation of continuous education centres;
- Organisation of training courses, workshops, seminars, forums and conferences in the fields of quality assurance in higher education, teaching and learning, and management of higher education institutions;
- Publishing of thematic analyses and reports about quality assurance in higher education;
- Informational and methodical support of higher education institutions and provision of relevant information about quality assurance in higher education to stakeholders, including through its website (<https://iqaa.kz/>);
- Participation in the development of legislation on quality assurance in higher education and other related issues in higher education, which is undertaken by the legislative authorities.

##### **2. Purpose and scope of the evaluation**

This review will evaluate the extent to which IQAA fulfils the requirements of Parts 2 and 3 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will provide information to the ENQA Board to aid



its consideration of whether membership of IQAA should be reconfirmed and to EQAR to support IQAA's application to the register.

## 2.1 Activities of IQAA within the scope of the ESG

In order for IQAA to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all activities of IQAA that are within the scope of the ESG, i.e. reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning (and their relevant links to research and innovation). This is independent of whether the activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA and whether they are obligatory or voluntary in nature.

The following activities of IQAA have to be addressed in the external review:

- Institutional and programme accreditation of higher education institutions;
- Institutional and programme accreditation of research institutes.

Considering the renewal of IQAA's application to EQAR, the self-evaluation report and the external review report is expected to also cover issues where the Register Committee concluded in its last decision that the agency complied only partially with the ESG i.e. with ESG 2.1, ESG 2.2, ESG 2.5 and ESG 2.6.

Additionally, the review should also address:

- any organisational and operational changes in the activity of IQAA following the establishment of a Supervisory Board (see [decision on IQAA Change Report of 30 April 2019](#));
- how IQAA ensures the separation of activities that fall within and outside the scope of the ESG, in particular referring to the i.e. 'accreditation of TVET institutions' and the 'accreditation of continuous education centres', taking into account Annex 5 of the [Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG](#)!

## 3. The review process

The review will be conducted following the methodology of ENQA Agency Reviews. The process is designed in line with *the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and the requirements of *the EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation and agreement on the Terms of Reference for the review between IQAA, ENQA and EQAR;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel by ENQA;
- Notification of EQAR about the appointed panel;
- Self-assessment by IQAA including the preparation and publication of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to IQAA;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the ENQA Review Committee;

- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Decision making by the EQAR Register Committee on the agency's registration on EQAR;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or the ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency, including a voluntary progress visit.

### **3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members**

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts (at least one of which is currently employed by an ENQA member agency), an academic employed by a higher education institution, a student member, and eventually a labour market representative (if requested). One of the members will serve as the chair of the review panel, and another member as a review secretary. For ENQA Agency Reviews 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. An additional panel member may be included in the panel at the request of the agency under review. In this case, an additional fee to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses is applied.

The panel will be supported by the ENQA Review Coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA's requirements are met throughout the process. The ENQA staff member 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 IQAA with the list of suggested experts and their respective curricula vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the IQAA review.

### **3.2 Self-assessment by IQAA, including the preparation of a self-assessment report**

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

- Self-assessment is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-assessment report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a brief description of the national HE and QA system; background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis; each criterion (ESG parts 2 and 3) addressed individually, and considerations of how the agency has addressed the recommendations as noted in the ENQA Board's membership decision letter and the instances of partial compliance noted in the previous EQAR Register

Committee decision of inclusion/renewal. All agency's QA activities (whether within their national jurisdiction or outside of it, and whether obligatory or voluntary) will be described and their compliance with the ESG analysed.

- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which IQAA fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG.

- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat which has four weeks to pre-scrutinise it before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny 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 whether the necessary information, as stated in the guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case 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 reject the report and ask for a revised version within two weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1 000 EUR will be charged to the agency.

- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of six weeks prior to the site visit.

### **3.3 A site visit by the review panel**

The review panel will draft a proposal of the site visit schedule which shall be submitted to the agency at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule is to include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is usually 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to IQAA at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted in a site visit by the ENQA Review Coordinator.

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 or the granting or reconfirmation of ENQA membership.

### **3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report**

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings concerning each standard of parts 2 and 3 of the ESG. A draft will be first submitted to the ENQA Review Coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity and language, and it will be then submitted to IQAA usually within 10 weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If IQAA chooses to provide a position statement in reference to the draft 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 IQAA and finalise and submit the document to ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will normally not exceed 40 pages in length.

When preparing the report, the review panel should also 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 consideration of the Register Committee of the agency's application to EQAR<sup>2</sup>.

For the purpose of applying for ENQA membership, IQAA is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation for applying for membership and the ways in which IQAA expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be taken into consideration by the Board together with the final evaluation report when deciding on the agency's membership.

#### **4. Follow-up process and publication of the report**

IQAA will receive the expert panel's report and publish it on its website once the ENQA Board has approved the report. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. As part of ENQA Agency Review follow-up activities, IQAA commits to react on the review recommendations and submit a follow-up report to the ENQA Board within the timeframe indicated in the Board's decision on membership. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

The follow-up report could be complemented by a small-scale progress visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered to be of particular importance or a challenge to IQAA. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or judgment of compliance of the agency with the ESG. Should the agency not wish to take advantage of this opportunity, it may opt out by informing the ENQA Review Coordinator about this.

#### **5. Use of the report**

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is used by the ENQA Board for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether IQAA can be reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. The report is also used as a basis for the Register Committee's decision on the agency's registration on EQAR. The review process is thus designed to serve these two purposes. However, the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by ENQA. Once submitted to ENQA and until it is approved by its Board, the report may not be used or relied upon by IQAA, the panel, or any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. The approval of the report is independent of the decision of the ENQA Board on membership.

For the purposes of EQAR registration, the agency will submit the review report (once approved by the ENQA Board) via email to EQAR before expiry of the agency's registration on EQAR. The agency should also include its self-assessment report (in a PDF format), a Declaration of Honour, full curriculum vitae (CVs) of all review panel members and any other relevant documents to the application (i.e. annexes, statement to the review report,

updates). EQAR is expected to consider the review report and the agency's application at its Register Committee meeting in June 2022.

## **6. Indicative schedule of the review**

- Agreement on Terms of Reference: November/December 2020
- Appointment of review panel members: January 2021
- Self-assessment completed: 31 May 2021
- Pre-screening of SAR by ENQA Review Coordinator: June 2021  
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable: July 2021
- Briefing of review panel members: August 2021
- Review panel site visit: September 2021
- Draft of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA Review Coordinator for pre-screening: October 2021
- Draft of evaluation report to IQAA: November 2021
- Statement of IQAA to review panel if necessary: 30 November 2021
- Submission of final report to ENQA: December 2021
- Consideration of the report by ENQA Board: February 2022
- Publication of report: March 2022
- EQAR Register Committee meeting: June 2022

### ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

<b>EHEA</b>	European Higher Education Area
<b>ENQA</b>	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
<b>EQA</b>	External Quality Assurance
<b>EQAR</b>	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
<b>ESG</b>	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>IQA</b>	Internal Quality Assurance
<b>IQAA</b>	Independent Kazakh Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
<b>MES</b>	Ministry of Education and Science
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>PAM</b>	Post-accreditation monitoring
<b>QA</b>	Quality Assurance
<b>SAR</b>	Self-Assessment Report
<b>ToRs</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

## ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

### DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY IQAA

Self-Assessment Report which included links to IQAA's internal documents, guidelines, regulations, standards and National legislation.

Additionally the panel before and during the site –visit the request some additional evidences and translations:

Strategic plan

Annual Plan from 2017 to 2021

Activities of IQAA:

- Statistical data on institutional and programme accreditation of higher education institutions 2017-2021
- Statistical data on institutional and programme accreditation of research institutes 2017-2021

Financial resources: IQAA Budgets 2017-2020 (budget).

Human Resources:

- Employees number
- Survey of employees on the level of contentment with working conditions\_2020
- Survey of employees on the level of contentment with working conditions\_2021
- Survey template

Internal quality assurance

- List of external and internal trainings of employees
- Order for professional development of agency employees
- Rules of remuneration, bonuses, provision of financial assistance, provision of vacations for employees
- Regular Self-Analysis
- Code of Ethics of IQAA employees
- Thematic analysis on quality of IQAA employees based on feedback from external audit participants

Experts:

- Statistical information about experts:
- Training Review Panels: training program and list of participants from 2017 to 2021

Reports (in English):

- Examples of Follow up reports
- Examples of negatives reports
- Examples of Experts Council Summary

## ENQA progress review of IQAA, 2019

### Translations

- Thematic analysis based on feedback from external audit participants 2020
- Thematic analysis on the use of institutional data by area of improvement 2019
- Guidelines on internal quality assurance
- Rules for selection of experts for external reviews
- Guidelines for student experts
- Guidelines for self-assessment report:
- Guidelines for self-assessment report of program accreditation (Master/Bachelor)
- Guidelines for self-assessment report for program accreditation (Phd)
- Guidelines for self-assessment report for institutional accreditation
- Guidelines for grouping remarks:
- Guidelines for grouping remarks of institutional accreditation
- Guidelines for grouping remarks of program accreditation



## ENQA AGENCY REVIEW 2022

THIS REPORT presents findings of the ENQA Agency Review of the Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA), undertaken in 2021.

**enqa.**

European Association for  
Quality Assurance in Higher Education