

Alina Zhumagulova  
Director  
Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR)  
Kabanbay Batyr Avenue 42-VP-17  
010000 Astana, Kazakhstan

Dublin, 14 December 2016

**Subject: Membership of IAAR in ENQA**

Dear Mrs. Zhumagulova,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 30 November 2016, the Board of ENQA agreed that IAAR met the necessary requirements for being granted ENQA Membership for five years from that date. The Board's decision was based on the review report and the report scrutiny and overall, the Board got a very positive impression of IAAR's commitment and remarkable progress in reaching substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The Board expects a follow-up report to be based on the recommendations in the review report (as outlined in the attached annex) within two years of the decision, i.e. by November 2018.

Please accept my congratulations to IAAR for the positive review outcome and I look forward to a fruitful future cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Padraig Walsh  
President

Annex: Areas for development

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

In order to strengthen the contribution of students to as a stakeholder group to IAAR's governance and work, the IAAR Accreditation Council would benefit by increasing the student representation in its membership.

### **ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

It is recommended that, in the medium term, the agency should consider how it can use the information contained in its accreditation reports so as to inform general developments in higher education policy and practice. In this context, it would be appropriate to consult with HEI's to seek their views on areas of information or guidance that would be most relevant and valuable to them. It is recommended that the agency further develops its current work to communicate to institutions and to the public more widely the significance of its quality assurance activities, and provides further guidance in understanding the significance of the outcomes of accreditation.

### **ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

It is recommended that IAAR, as it implements fully its internal quality assurance procedures, maintains regular internal reviews and reports concerning the level of performance against the measures that it has defined for internal quality assurance.

It is recommended that the agency's periodic surveys of experts and institutions be reviewed with the aim of increasing their usefulness, and that the agency should consider ways in which the resulting information could be shared more widely. In addition, evaluative feedback and comment on individual accreditation events should be introduced.

It is recommended that in the interest of public information, IAAR makes a more concise and accessible statement regarding its internal quality assurance available on its website, possibly in the form of an executive summary of the IQAS Manual.

### **ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The agency may wish to review its checklists of criteria with a view to making them more manageable within the duration and scope of an accreditation event.

To improve further the reporting on HEI's internal quality assurance it would be desirable for IAAR now to review its *2011 Guidelines for organising and conducting the external expertise in the educational expertise of the education organisations*. The review should aim to give the agency's experts more detailed guidance on how to use the IAAR 2015 standards and how to ensure that these were adequately covered in the main body of accreditation reports as well as in the concluding checklists.

### **ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE**

It is recommended that the contribution of student views to the design and review of the agency's quality assurance methodologies should be strengthened.

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### **ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES**

It is recommended that the agency ensures that its planning ensures that there is sufficient time for the proper preparation and confirmation of accreditation reports before their consideration by the Accreditation Council.

It is recommended that IAAR review its use of 'cluster' accreditation events. The review should define the maximum practical size of a cluster, taking into consideration the effect of such arrangements on the participation of single stakeholder experts, and the adequacy of the information on subject programmes contained in the resulting reports. In particular, the agency should ensure that in designing 'cluster' accreditations, a student panel member is able to participate and contribute fully to the procedures with regard to individual subject programmes.

### **ESG 2.6 REPORTING**

It is recommended that IAAR review its guidelines with a view to providing a more developed specification of the format of the report, perhaps including a standard template for different types of accreditation. In this context, it is further recommended that reports on 'clusters' of programmes be redesigned so as to provide a detailed statement on each individual programme

### **ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS**

IAAR is recommended to review the constitution and membership of its Commission for the Consideration of Appeals and Complaints. IAAR is advised that its membership should not include members of the Accreditation Council, and that the membership should be broadened to include appropriately experienced members of the academic community.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

Some more general suggestions are being made, extending beyond strictly interpreted ESG which IAAR may wish to consider when reflecting on its further development.

Regarding its governance and management structures, IAAR may wish in the medium term to review its Statutes. Such a review should seek to make completely transparent the separate responsibility and authority of the Accreditation Council for all academic-related matters in the accreditation activity of the agency. There should be a clear differentiation between the role of the Accreditation Council and the role, responsibilities and authority of the Founder Director of the agency.

The agency might also wish to consider the value of appointing a new overarching governance body, which can advise IAAR on the broader policies, management, and strategic direction of the agency, thus freeing the Accreditation Council to concern itself primarily with accreditation matters.