

Sietze Looijenga
Director
Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities (QANU)
Catharijnesingel 56
3503 RA Utrecht
The Netherlands

Dublin, 14 December 2016

Subject: Membership of QANU in ENQA

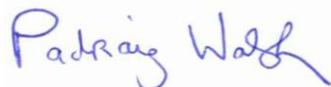
Dear Mr. Looijenga,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 30 November 2016, the Board of ENQA agreed to reconfirm QANU's membership of ENQA for five years from that date. The ENQA Board concluded that QANU is in substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines and the Board would like to receive a follow-up report on the recommendations in the panel report (as outlined in the annex attached) within two years of its decision, i.e. by November 2018.

In addition, the Board would like to strongly encourage QANU to proactively engage in producing and publishing its own thematic analysis that would describe and analyse the general findings of QANU's external quality assurance activities. Such analysis should feed back to the stakeholders and society, and the Board considers it would strengthen the internal quality assurance of the agency.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat. Please accept my congratulations for the re-confirmation of membership of QANU.

Yours sincerely,



Padraig Walsh
President

Annex: Areas for development

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ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

QANU is recommended to fine-tune its mission and to clearly strive for translation of it into its day-to-day operation. The review panel recommends working on an organisational chart, which, as a starting point, could also support visibility of the mission statement within the agency as such. QANU is recommended to use the mission statement in place for further development of strategic planning approaches, including stakeholder opinions in a formalised way.

QANU is recommended considering and expanding its own board to ensure a wider stakeholder involvement in its own governance. QANU should in particular strive for inclusion of student representative members in its board. In addition, QANU should impact, *as a stakeholder*, the inclusion of students (PhD candidates) in the experts' panels in the SEP.

ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

QANU is recommended to reflect on its governance structure in order to safeguard the organisational independence more thoroughly. Also, as mentioned earlier, QANU is recommended to consider expanding its board to a wider stakeholder involvement such as a broader stakeholder inclusion with a student and an employer. These stakeholders in QANU's governance structure would support its acting as independent and autonomous agency.

ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

QANU is recommended to take up a pro-active and formalised role with regard to thematic analysis. The agency is especially recommended using the experience of project managers gained from various assessment procedures in order to conduct the thematic analysis in the narrow sense. QANU is recommended to intensify exchange of experiences with other stakeholders, such as NVAO, the Ministry and universities, on a systematic basis, in order to further jointly develop the system of external quality assurance.

ESG 3.5 RESOURCES

QANU is recommended to formalise various human resource management approaches into one document.

It is recommended that QANU would use the experience and qualifications of its staff in order to deploy competences, skills and knowledge for thematic analysis, participation in European/international projects, workshops etc. relevant for quality assurance.

QANU is also recommended to develop a cooperative approach regarding the training of secretaries jointly with NVAO.

ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

QANU is recommended to apply an internal quality assurance policy, which is to be available on its website.

QANU is recommended to consider policies and procedures for systematic feedback from assessment procedures supported by adequate follow-up measures.

QANU is recommended to develop specific internal quality approaches regarding the monitoring of its freelance project managers.

QANU is recommended to formalise the good practice in place (mentoring, shadowing, collegial feedback and support processes in place) in written documentation.

ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Although the cyclical review is in place, it is recommended that effective follow-up processes are established between reviews, aiming to reinforce critical reflection on own processes and procedures. Ideally, QANU, as a whole, is involved in such discussions (board, managing body - incl. management and project managers).

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE CONDUCT

QANU should provide a clear mapping between ESG Part 1 and the assessment areas defined in the SEP and in addition to perform an independent critical analysis concerning to what extent the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in ESG Part 1 are addressed in frameworks for programme assessment under which the agency performs its tasks.

Relevant findings should be shared with relevant stakeholders aiming to contribute to further development of external quality assurance in the given context the agency is operating.

QANU should take care that panel reports for the assessment of research units (incl. PhD Programmes) and for the programme assessment reflect the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes as of ESG Part 1, where it is relevant and possible.

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

QANU is encouraged to reflect on its role in the given context. While, on the one hand, QANU is a stakeholder in the process of external quality assurance, QANU, on the other side, is relying on stakeholders' opinions and feedback itself once its facilitation role is concerned.

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

QANU is recommended to explicitly strive in its role, as a stakeholder, for the inclusion of students (PhD candidates) in panels in the assessment of research units (incl. PhD programmes). In addition, it is recommended that international experience is represented in the assessment panel.

QANU is recommended to formalise the process of convening a panel, supported by written documentation and guidance concerning potential causes for conflict of interest.

QANU is recommended to intensify cooperation concerning the training of panel chairs jointly with NVAO.

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

There are no particular recommendations for QANU besides guaranteeing a coherent and consistent use of frameworks under which the agency is operating. QANU has to ensure that assessment panels base their opinions on the same understanding and ensuring a coherent follow-up. Processes in

place, aiming to ensure that assessment panels base their opinions on the same understanding, should be formalised in their internal quality assurance manual.

When it comes to study programme assessment this is a matter to be taken up by NVAO in collaboration with the agencies, while the assessment of research units/PhD programmes is a matter to be taken up by the universities leadership.

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

QANU should consider publishing the reports themselves and not rely solely on the publication initiative of NVAO.

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

QANU is recommended to reflect on the complaint and appeal procedure for the assessment of research units (incl. PhD programmes).

QANU should publish its complaints and appeals procedure concerning the assessment of study programmes on its website.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

QANU's overall good contributions to the external quality assurance are appreciated, as being a professional facilitator for the assessment of programmes and research units (incl. PhD programmes). However, QANU should consider to become more pro-active in contributing to further development of external quality assurance in the Netherlands. QANU has not regarded itself as a policy-maker. The review panel found that QANU, as an expert and knowledge-based organisation, needs to actively deploy expertise to the system. QANU is recommended to apply a cooperative approach with other stakeholders.