

**Follow-up report by National Accreditation Agency (NAA).
Implementation of ENQA Board's recommendations.
Expert panel's review report of 15.03.2017.**

I. Introduction

In 2017, the National Accreditation Agency (NAA) has undergone a partial review for the renewal of its membership in ENQA. The review was conducted against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) of 2005. NAA's planning and implementation of all activities are aligned with the ENQA Board's recommendation "to be more focused on quality enhancement in all aspects of operation". NAA has incorporated ESG 2015 into all relevant procedures and being results-oriented is a priority of NAA's activity in the field of programme accreditation and quality assurance of higher education. The Agency's management, experts and methodologists keep analyzing the evaluation procedures and defining measures for continuous improvement in all stages and technical aspects of the QA process.

II. Implementation of the Recommendations

The Agency ensured the implementation of the submitted recommendations in accordance with ESG-2015.

1. ENQA CRITERION 1 / SUB-CRITERION ESG 2005 2.4: PROCESSES FIT FOR PURPOSE

The Board recommends NAA to continue its effort to recruit and train international experts in order to allow for an international perspective on the quality of Russian higher education.

NAA needs to define a specific role for students as full members of expert panels, for instance, being tasked to evaluate the general quality of the learning environment, students' involvement in internal quality assurance procedures in HEI, students' satisfaction with the quality of individual programmes. This is especially important with a view to the explicit requirement of the ESG 2015 that external quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

In 2016, the All-Russian Public Organization "Russian Union of Youth" (RUY) was empowered as an expert organization for external review of educational activities and thus was able to involve students in the state accreditation procedure.

Since January 2017, they launched a trial activity called "Public forms of students' involvement in the state accreditation procedures" and as a part of the experiment, a group of external experts, including students, undertook number of surveys and interviews with the students of study programs under review. Upon completion of the external reviews, the students (working as experts) produced and provided their reports to NAA.

Special proposals for including students to the expert panels for external reviews have been made in the regulatory legal acts, including the experts' qualification requirements, the requirements for expert organizations, the procedure for nominating and

selecting experts and expert organizations for state accreditation, the procedure for experts' certification (including the procedure for maintaining a register of experts and expert organizations). The requirements to students participating in external reviews are being developed.

For the reporting period, NAA in cooperation with RUY:

- prepared methodological materials to define the role of students as full members of expert panels in assessing the conditions, content, organization and quality of the educational process,

- established the procedure of students' participation in external quality assurance procedures in relation to study programs, including the assessment of students' satisfaction with the quality of study programs, as well as individual programs;

- prepared and conducted training seminars "Issues of state accreditation of educational activities" for 43 representatives of student communities from different regions of the Russian Federation.

- ensured participation of 17 representatives of the student expert community (21%) in external quality assurance procedures.

Due to the changes in the Federal Law of May 2, 2015 № 122-FL "On amendments to the Labor code of the Russian Federation and articles 11 and 73 of the Federal Law "On education in the Russian Federation" from June 2017 the updated Federal State Educational Standards (based on the applicable professional standards) were introduced.

The new version of standards introduces the section "Requirements to the applied mechanisms for assessing the quality of educational activities and training of students on the study program". The quality of educational activities and training of students on the study program is determined within the framework of the internal evaluation system, as well as the external evaluation system, in which the educational organization participates on a voluntary basis.

As part of the internal system for quality evaluation of educational activities on the study program, students are given the opportunity to assess the conditions, content, organization and quality of the educational process in general and of individual disciplines (modules) and practices.

NAA is currently actively participating in the events within the framework of ERASMUS+ Jean Monnet project "European Quality Assurance for Students" (EQAS), which is aimed at gathering, analyzing and disseminating European good practices in involving students in higher education quality assurance (both external and internal).

Simultaneously NAA continued recruitment of the international experts for the external quality reviews to promote internalization of Russian higher education system.

The number of international experts increased by 2.5 times and currently there is a pool of 12 people.

2. ENQA CRITERION 1 / SUB-CRITERION ESG 2005 2.5: REPORTING

The Board recommends NAA to develop the report template so that the experts' analyses and arguments behind the assessments as well as recommendations for enhancements are presented in the reports and published. This would greatly increase level of transparency, the possibility to check consistency as well as the value of the state accreditation process for the HEIs in terms of quality enhancement.

In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation introduced orders regulating specific issues of external review in Russia.

The operation procedure for experts and (or) expert organizations included in the expert panel for the external review is governed by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of RF of 09.11.2016 № 1386. The work of expert panel is regulated depending on the mode of external review: with or without a site-visit. There is a restriction on the inclusion of several basic study programs in one expert report. The expert report on external review is prepared for each basic study program.

Ministry of Education of RF issued the Order of 09.11.2016 № 1385 approving the list of documents required for the external review with a site-visit (or without it) to an educational organization (or its branch).

The reporting forms for the external review and the conclusions made by experts and (or) expert organizations, compiled on the external review results, were adopted by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of RF of 17.01.2017 № 24.

In order to ensure the availability of reporting documents for all stakeholders the Accreditation Body is obliged within 3 working days after receiving the expert panel's conclusion to send its copy to the educational organization (or hands it under signature to the authorized representative of the organization) and place it on its official website.

The educational organization has the right to withdraw the application for state accreditation at any stage of the procedure before the Accreditation Body makes its decision.

In case of refusal in or withdrawal of the state accreditation, the HEI has the right to submit the application for its carrying out not earlier than in one year after the elimination of the issues specified in the expert report.

During the period between external reviews and within the framework of supervisory activities, the educational organizations are inspected to assess their activities and quality of education. Based on the outcomes of these inspections the recommendations and proposals for improvement of educational activities and follow up measures are issued. Upon completion of these arrangements, the educational organization provides a follow-up report.

3. ENQA CRITERION 5 / ESG 2005 3.6: INDEPENDENCE

The Board recommends NAA staff not to be members of the Accreditation Commission, which is responsible for selection and certification of experts and expert organizations thus providing more value to quality assurance of Accreditation Commission as an independent decisive body. Although outside the scope of this review, it is also recommended that Rosobrnadzor does not include its own staff as members of its collegial body.

NAA provides the selection of applicants in cooperation with different stakeholders for certification of experts and expert organizations involved in the external review procedure.

NAA's staff participates in nomination and certification of experts and expert organizations in accordance with the regulatory acts.

One of the conditions for nomination as an expert is the submission of recommendations from the applicant's main place of work (e.g. HEI) to the Accreditation Commission.

Inclusion of NAA staff members into the Accreditation Commission is considered as internal rational need to ensure more relevant and qualitative composition of the expert community.

At the same time, there have been some changes in the composition of the Accreditation Commission, when the number of HEI representatives increased by five people (17.8%) and the number of NAA's staff reduced by one person (10.6%).

Along with this, the independence of the Accreditation Commission's decisions is justified by its quantitative composition: with the total number of the Accreditation Commission members – 23 people, the number of NAA's staff is six people, i.e. approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the nominal list, thus, the opinion of NAA's staff cannot be recognized as decisive.

Experts and (or) expert organizations are nominated for the external review from the Register of experts and expert organizations involved in external reviews automatically using the random selection method, taking into account the following:

- Integrated Groups of Professions, Specialties and Fields of Training in respect of which the expert (expert organization) is certified for conducting the external review of educational activities;
- Expert's place of residence (location of the expert organization).

Computerized random selection of experts does not allow the accreditation body to influence the nomination of experts for the external review, which makes the nomination procedure independent.

All information work with educational organizations and experts is maintained through the State Accreditation Information System (SAIS).

Within the system and based on the expert panel's conclusion, the Accreditation Board, after consideration of provided documents and materials, makes a decision on granting the state accreditation or denial.

Since September 2015, Mr. Pavel Krasnorutsky, the Chairman of the All-Russian Public Organization «Russian Union of Youth», which is a partner expert organization and highly promotes students' involvement in external review procedures, heads the Accreditation Commission of the Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science (a collegial body, established to consider the issues related to state accreditation).

4. ENQA CRITERION 6 / ESG 2005 3.7: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE CRITERIA AND PROCESSES USED BY THE AGENCIES

The Board recommends to NAA and Rosobrnadzor to make the complaints procedure more transparent, for instance with explicit and predefined criteria for assessing a complaint. It is also recommended that the possibility to complain against the conclusion of a panel is described on NAA's website.

NAA is recommended to create a basis for a follow-up in the form of direct feedback to HEIs in the reports and subsequent contact with the institutions about their progress.

In order to achieve the transparency of the appeal procedure, the following criteria are used to evaluate a complaint:

- a) determining whether the complaint refers to the Rosobrnadzor's competence;

- b) identifying the presence (absence) of the elements of an administrative offense in action and (or) inaction, which are appealed;
- c) assessment of the complaint's subject in the framework of the decision and (or) taken actions (lack of actions) in accordance with the regulatory legal acts;
- d) classifying the complaint's conformity with the formalized requirements.

For every educational organization, NAA IT staff created in SAIS a personal account to interact with organization and exchange information. The ENQA Board recommendation to create follow-up procedures is fulfilled through provision of feedback reports and subsequent communication with universities, feedback during training seminars hosted by educational organizations, meetings with universities' representatives and site visits. These events are initiated by the educational organizations and mostly target at clarification of the typical errors occurring during external review and analysis of the information posted on the universities' official websites.

NAA prepared and submitted amendment to a regulatory legal act of Rosobrnadzor on establishment of an Appeal Commission within the Accreditation Commission. It ensures the possibility for HEI to appeal based on the external review results.

III. Conclusion

The external evaluation reviews, the feedback from its stakeholders through surveys, working groups, seminars, opinion exchange by QA professionals plus networking, cooperation at local and international level – all these encourage NAA to keep questioning its own procedures and legal provisions aiming to improve the processes, standards and guidelines in QA sphere in Russian Federation. This follow-up report lists only part of the positive changes that NAA has undertaken in the recent past and the process is still going on.

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