

Presentation of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA)



(a) Brief Description of the quality assurance system in Ukraine

After Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity in 2014, radical reforms of the higher education sector began, aimed at establishing an autonomous system aligned with the European higher education and research areas, to develop quality assurance systems at national and institutional levels, to ensure accountable and autonomous university management and governance, and to involve students and the other stakeholders into decision-making processes. The Law of Ukraine on higher education adopted in the summer of 2014 established the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA) as collegial body and public non-profit organization responsible for quality assurance in higher education in Ukraine. NAQA grounds its activities on the principles of trust and mutual respect, aiming to disseminate them in the Ukrainian academic environment. These principles should lay the foundation for the reputational capital of Ukrainian higher education institutions (HEIs), along with a new culture of quality and integrity. In the process of external quality assurance NAQA implements the paradigm of consultative evaluation and assists HEIs in their pursuit of excellence establishing a constructive dialogue and fruitful cooperation for continuous improvement of the higher education quality in Ukraine.

According to the Law on higher education **study programme accreditation is mandatory**. The HEIs can issue diplomas only if the relevant study programme is accredited by authorised bodies (NAQA or EQAR-registered foreign agencies included into the Order of Cabinet of Ministers).

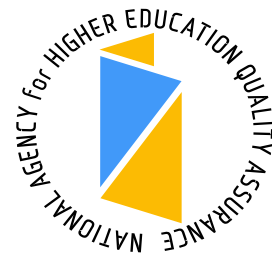
NAQA's quality assurance procedures. NAQA conducts external quality assurance in accordance with the Regulation on accreditation of study programmes developed by NAQA and adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in August 2019. Mandatory condition for the study programme accreditation is its compliance with 10 criteria for the study programme quality evaluation aligned to ESG-2015 (Design and goals of the study programme; Its structure and content; Access to the study programme and recognition of learning outcomes; Training and teaching; Assessment and evaluation of the learning outcomes and academic integrity; Human resources; Educational environment and material resources; Internal quality assurance of the HEIs; Transparency and publicity; Learning through research). The external quality assurance process includes the following stages: HEIs applies to NAQA and submits self-assessment report, NAQA expert panel (at least three experts including student expert) conducts 3 days site-visit and develops report, then the



expert panel report is reviewed and verified by the relevant subject area council. Next step - both expert panel report and conclusion of the subject area council are reviewed by NAQA members and NAQA makes final decision. At all stages HEI can provide its arguments and facts to respond experts' concerns. There are four potential outcomes of the external evaluation by NAQA – excellent accreditation for 5 years (grade A), normal accreditation for 5 years (grade B), one year conditional accreditation (grade E), denial (grade F). English translation of the Regulation on study programme accreditation is available at NAQA website - https://en.naqa.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Accreditation_Regulations_2019_ENG.pdf

Cross-border higher education quality assurance. In Ukraine HEIs may choose a suitable EQAR-registered agency included into the list approved by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The order dates back to 10 July 2019 No. 554-p. The EQAR-registered agencies conduct accreditations in Ukraine on the basis of their own criteria. Only final decision made by these Agencies on accreditation of study programmes in Ukraine are acceptable and equivalent to the accreditation by NAQA. The information about each accredited study programme is entered into the Ukrainian Unified State Electronic Database on Education.

NAQA's Internationalization. One of NAQA's strategic objectives is the internationalization of the higher education in Ukraine in general and the activities of NAQA in particular. Within two years since its official launch NAQA has become affiliate to ENQA and a full member of INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education), CEENQA (Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies), ICAI (International Center for Academic Integrity). NAQA conducted a series of international events, seminars and webinars with QA colleagues from all over the world. A number of memorandums of cooperation with foreign QA agencies and the other stakeholders are signed by NAQA. The results of such meetings and bilateral cooperation are the revision and improvement of key procedures and documents, the development of new regulations and guidelines, the exchange of experience of activities during lockdown, including distant accreditation site visits, and advice and expertise of international experts on the quality of higher education. All events and results of such meetings are widely covered on NAQA website as well as on its official Facebook and Twitter pages. NAQA continuously seeks advice and expert assessment from international and national experts for the external evaluation of its procedures, documents and activities in general. NAQA collaborates with National Erasmus Office, American Councils for International Education, British Council, USAID, OSCE, and others. In December 2020 NAQA International Advisory Board was established and currently it includes 9 well-known international quality assurance and academic integrity experts.



(b) Brief Description of the responsibilities and structure of National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA)

NAQA is responsible for setting the requirements for quality and transparency for institutions, programmes, and standards. It implements the state policy in the field of higher education, withstands modern challenges, and becomes the catalyst for positive changes in higher education in Ukraine in order to create a culture of its quality based on such values as partnership, trust, independence, professionalism, innovation, academic integrity, and transparency.

The major **strategic goals** of NAQA are to develop the culture of quality in higher education, to assure the quality of higher education and research, to meet the European standards of higher education quality assurance.

According to the current Ukrainian legislation **NAQA's mandate** includes:

- accreditation of study programmes of all three cycles (bachelor, master, PhD);
- accreditation of thesis defence committees;
- accreditation of independent evaluation organizations;
- institutional accreditation of higher education institutions;
- development of university rankings;
- compliance with academic integrity;
- the other activities (Annual Report on the State of Higher Education in Ukraine, contribution to the education policy regulations development, agreeing higher education standards etc.).

NAQA consists of **23 members** who are selected by the international commission through open competition considering gender balance and subject area representation. The results of the competition are approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Among NAQA members there are three representatives of employers and two student representatives as well as representatives of the National Academy of Science, at least one representative of state, municipal and private HEIs.

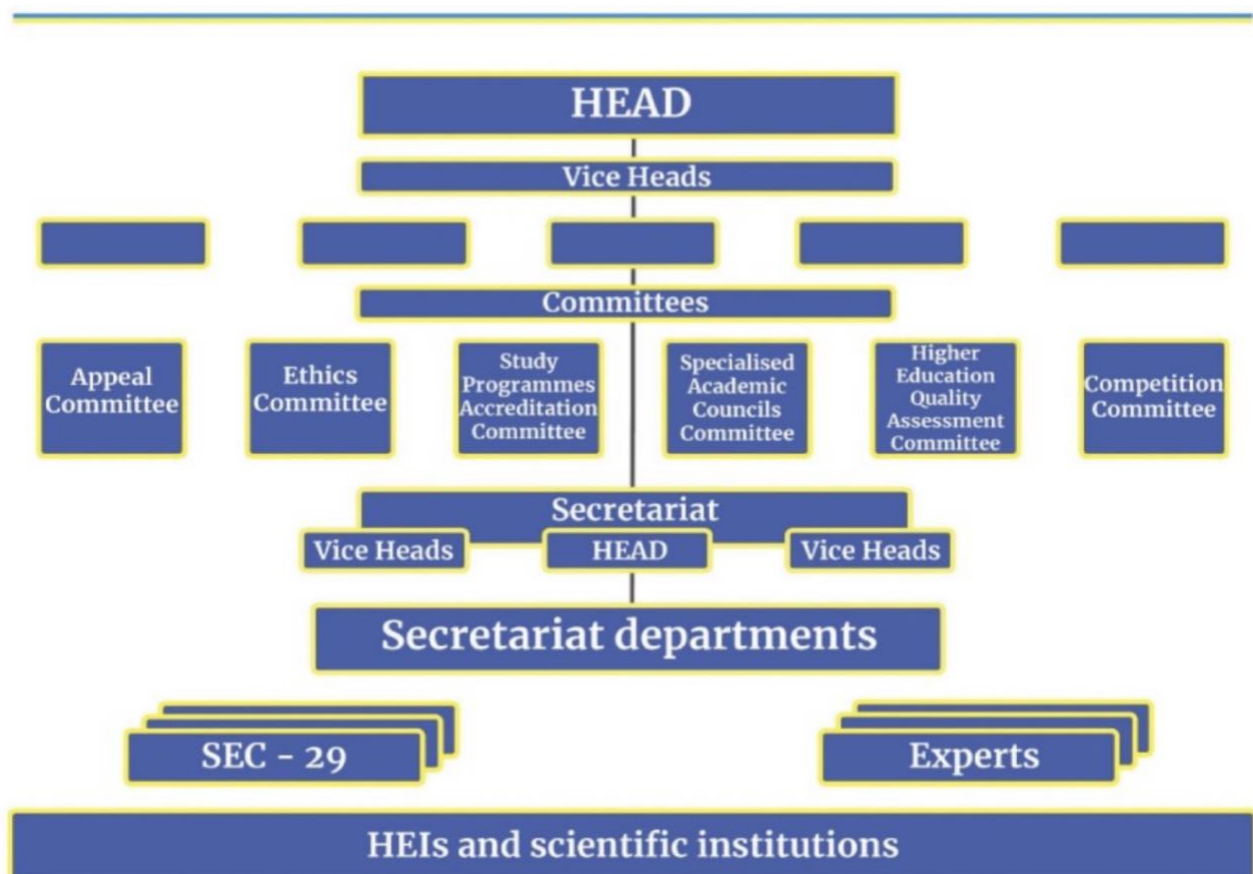
The first personal composition of the National Agency was formed in 2015, but due to some subjective and objective reasons it has never started its official work. The new NAQA personal composition was selected in December 2018. The Head and Vice-Heads of the NAQA were elected by NAQA members and approved by the Cabinet of Minister of Ukraine in February 2019. Since that time NAQA officially started activities.



Organizational, financial, technical, information and other support for the NAQA activities are provided by the **NAQA Secretariat** which includes such departments as Financial Planning and Accounting, Public Relations and International Cooperation, Legal Support and Appeals, Human Resources and Organizational Support, Study Programmes Accreditation, Expert Service, Specialized Expert Council, Research Degrees and Analytics. In total, there are 62 staff units in NAQA Secretariat.

NAQA has also formed **29 Subject Area Councils** (in total, about 400 members), recruited and trained about **4000 accreditation experts** (chart 1).

Chart 1 – NAQA structure





The catalyst of positive
change and improvement of
higher education quality in
Ukraine



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