

Report of the panel of the external review
of the National Centre of Public
Accreditation (NCPA)

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Executive Summary

This report analyses the compliance of the National Centre of Public Accreditation (NCPA) with the ENQA Membership Criteria. The report is based on an ENQA coordinated peer review of type A. Based on this report NCPA will apply for Full membership of ENQA for the first time. NCPA is already an affiliate of ENQA since September 2010. The site visit of the peer review panel in charge of the evaluation of the compliance with the ENQA Membership Criteria took place on 5 and 6 March 2014 in Moscow and Yoshkar-Ola.

NCPA was established in 2009 as an autonomous non-profit organization with the purpose of conducting program accreditation and providing an expert judgment on the quality of study programs offered by Russian educational institutions. NCPA is not involved in state accreditation. NCPA carries out evaluations in the field of public accreditation since 2010 but NCPA's activities are fully recognised by Russian law since the new Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation", which was enforced on the 1 of September 2013.

NCPA is a young and dynamic agency which has developed its policies and procedures over the last years in order to fulfil the ENQA Membership Criteria. It performs, together with its stakeholders and affiliates, a broad range of quality assurance activities. The panel has noticed a strong support from all stakeholders for NCPA to become a Full Member of ENQA.

The Panel was appreciative of the courtesy and efficiency of the NCPA's staff who supported the review and the visit. All documentation requested was provided either in advance of the meeting or while at the NCPA office in Yoshkar-Ola. The panel was very pleased by the completeness of the self-evaluation report with regard to the amount of evidence provided by NCPA.

The Review Panel carefully considered a range of documents and oral evidence which led to judgements of "full compliance" with ENQA membership ESG 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8 and "substantial compliance" with ESG 3.1.

Glossary of acronyms

AKKORK Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance and Career Development

APQN The Asia-Pacific Quality Network

CEENQA The Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance

CTC Center for Training and Consultancy

EHEA European Higher Education Area

ENQA European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

ESG The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

FSES Federal State Educational Standards

HE Higher Education

HEI Higher Education Institution

IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence

INQAAHE The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

NAA The National Accreditation Agency

NAB National Accreditation Board

NCPA The National Centre for Public Accreditation

NPRAO National Public Register of Accrediting Organisations in Accreditation

QA Quality Assurance

Rosobrnadzor The Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science

Introduction

This is the report of the review of NCPA undertaken in March 2014 for determining whether the agency meets the criteria for Full membership within the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Background and outline of the review process

The Statutes of ENQA require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review at least once every five years, in order to verify that they fulfil the membership provisions.

In November 2004, the General Assembly of ENQA agreed that the third part of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) should be incorporated into the membership provisions of its (then) regulations (now statutes). Substantial compliance with the ESG thus became the principal criterion for membership of ENQA. The ESG were subsequently adopted at the Bergen ministerial meeting of the Bologna Process in 2005. The third part of the ESG covers the cyclical external review of quality assurance and accreditation agencies.

The external review of NCPA was conducted in line with the process described in *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference.

The review panel

The review panel for the external review of NCPA was composed of the following members:

- Riitta Pyykkö, Vice Rector, University of Turku, Finland - Chair
- Patrick van den Bosch, Staff member Quality Assurance, Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges (VLUHR), Belgium - Secretary
- Oana Sarbu, Head of Experts and Inspectors Department, Quality Assurance Expert, Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), Romania
- Jean-Pierre Finance Former Rector of the University Henri Poincaré, Nancy, France and advisor for EU at the Conférence des Présidents d'Université (CPU - French university rectors conference), France - EUA nomination
- Asnate Kažoka, Master's degree in IT project management, University of Riga; Executive Board Member, Higher Education Quality Evaluation Center (HEQEC); Bologna expert in project "National Teams of Bologna experts, 2011 - 2013, Latvia", State Education Development Agency, Latvia - ESU nomination

The self-assessment report

NCPA's SER was communicated to the members of the ENQA panel in a timely manner on November 27th 2013 in the format of an electronic document, and two weeks later as a paper document with appendices. It provides a general overview on the Russian system of higher education and on the system of Quality Assurance in Russia. Furthermore the SER contains an overview of the structure and organisation of NCPA. It also provides clear and comprehensive information about the intended and actual role of NCPA and a discussion of the extent to which, in NCPA's own assessment, NCPA adheres to each ESG standard.

The last part of the SER includes a SWOT analysis, where NCPA reflects the strong points and the weak points, which need further improvement. This analysis actually reflects a considerable awareness on the part of NCPA of critical points in its organisation and processes. NCPA produced a self-evaluation report that provides a large amount of the evidence that the ENQA panel used to draw its conclusions.

NCPA attached several appendices in which the evidence was shown, including the statutes, procedures etc. The key documents were attached to the SER, the others were delivered electronically. While the panel was satisfied with the delivered SER and extensive annexes to the SER, the panel has requested a limited amount of additional documents to fully grasp NCPA's compliance to the ESG.

The site visit

The panel conducted a site visit to fully validate the self-evaluation and clarify any points at issue. The site visit took place on 5 - 6 March 2014 in Moscow and Yoshkar-Ola. The panel met for a preparatory meeting in Moscow the day before the site visit to discuss the self-evaluation report and to share first impressions regarding compliance with the ESG. The members also discussed the program of the visit and initial lines of questioning were distributed among panel members.

Before the site visit, the panel approved the interpreters, who were both external to the Agency's operations. Knowledge of the Russian language by the Chair and the Student Member were also useful to analyze evidence submitted in this language. However, the vast majority of documents, including key documents was also available in English for the benefit of the panel.

During the site visit, the panel was able to speak with various stakeholder groups, including the members of the National Accreditation Board, the representatives of the legislative bodies in the field of education, representatives of the Guild of Experts, the representatives (coordinators) of HEIs evaluated by NCPA, the members of "Rosakkreditatsiya" association (journal "Accreditation in Education", Research Institute for Education Quality Monitoring, Training and Consultancy Centre). The panel was also able to conduct video conference interviews with HEIs evaluated by NCPA and with foreign experts. Next to these interviews, the panel also met the coordinators and staff of NCPA.

The site visit took place in Moscow and Yoshkar-Ola. As the reviews conducted by NCPA can cover HEI in all of Russia and as the National Accreditation Board and the Guild of experts usually meet in Moscow, the interviews with the panel on March 5 took place in Moscow. The panel had the opportunity to interview three members of the Russian Federal Parliament (Duma) who were involved in developing the national law that enabled public accreditation. In the evening the panel took the plane to Yoshkar-Ola (Mari El Republic) where the office of NCPA is established.

By the end of the site visit, the Panel had a session with the board of NCPA to share the preliminary conclusions related to the level of compliance of NCPA in relation to each of the ESG. The review panel confirms that it was given access to all documents and people it wished to consult throughout the review.

The preparation of the Panels report

The secretary of the Panel drafted the report in cooperation with the chair and the rest of the Panel. The review panel submitted the draft report to NCPA for verification and comments about factual inaccuracies on May 27. NCPA was given two weeks to comment on the report. NCPA responded on June 2 2014. The final report was submitted to ENQA on June 6 2014.

The context of the review

The higher education system in Russia

Before the beginning of democracy in Russia there were only state HEIs, which were governed by the central managing education body. Since 1993 there has been an avalanche growth of private HEIs. In the last 19 years, also the state sector has grown by 61 HEIs, mainly through the establishment of new HEIs and through branches of the existing HEIs acquiring the status of autonomous HEIs. Thus, the total number of HEIs has increased by half. The leading role in the process of establishing new branches of HEIs has been played by the state sector: in 1993 there were 200 branches of the state HEIs, in 2008 - 1393, in 2012 - 2100.

There was also a rapid increase in the number of study places: in 1993, total student enrolment was just over 2.5 million; by 2008, it had increased to 7.5 million, mainly as a result of the rapid growth in the number of fee-paying students enrolled in state HEIs. It should be mentioned that during this period the State did not limit the growth of the higher education sector, but rather promoted it by permitting the admittance of fee-paying students to state HEIs, the branching of institutions and the establishment of new ones. The supporting state policy ensured the availability of higher education opportunities in the difficult and unstable economic situation which limited the mobility of Russians and thus prevented them from gaining access to higher education in large cities. The number of students in 2012 decreased by 18% compared to 2009 and dropped to 6 million, which is explained by

the demographic situation in the Russian Federation. Small HEIs dominate the education system: 40% of HEIs have less than 1000 students; two thirds of HEIs in the private sector have less than 1000 students (32% of HEIs have less than 200 students). From 2000 to 2012 the number of programs offered by the Russian HEIs increased from 20 000 to 36 000 mostly due to the newly opened educational programs in Economics, Law, and Humanities.

The Russian higher education system is regulated by the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” 29.12.2012 № 273-FL). The activity of state and municipal HEIs is subject to the Standard Regulations on an Educational Institution of Higher Professional Education (HEI) of the Russian Federation ratified by the Act of the government of the Russian Federation of 14.02.2008 N 71, with account of the amendments introduced in the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” № 273 and the Standard Regulations on Branches of Federal State Educational Institutions of Higher Professional Education (Higher Educational Institutions). This was adopted by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation on 01.12.2011 № 2865), with account of the amendments introduced in the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” № 273.

According to Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” 29.12.2012 № 273-FL the following stages of higher education are identified: Bachelor – total study duration no less than 4 years; Master – total study duration 2 years (the program is available after the completion of the Bachelor degree);- Specialist – traditional one-tier degree, total study duration no less than 5 years and Post-graduate studies.

Russian HEIs offer academic programs at the Bachelors, Specialists and Masters levels. Bachelor level programs are more practice-oriented; Master programs provide students with competencies they will need for their future research or teaching activities. It should be noted that the two-cycle system is not used with regard to approximately one hundred specialties which are listed on a special Register adopted by the Federal Government of Russia. Academic studies in the specified majors lead to the Specialist’s Diploma.

A major change with regard to quality assurance is the new Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation, which was enforced on the 1 of September 2013. This new law enables the possibility to grant public accreditation. It is worth mentioning that all higher education is called professional higher education in the current Russian legislation. Professional higher education does not mean for instance only education by universities of applied sciences.

Quality Assurance in Russia

Today the quality assurance system in Russia involves three procedures: 1. licensing, 2. state accreditation and 3. public accreditation. Licensing is conducted to ensure that an HEI has sufficient facilities (premises, equipment, information and library resources, and teaching staff) to carry out educational activities and to launch educational activities along with certain privileges.

State accreditation aims at the recognition of the quality of higher education as corresponding to the Federal State Educational Standards (FSES). In the Russian Federation the requirements for the quality of education and training are set at the state level by the FSES. The FSES is a set of coordinated state educational standards and requirements binding for all state accredited educational programmes of primary, basic general, secondary, secondary vocational education and higher professional education. The FSES shape the contents of education and establish the required quality of the content of education (curricula and syllabi); the teaching and support staff; the information provision of the teaching and research process and the actual knowledge and skills of graduates

When compliant with the FSES, an institute can obtain the status of academy or the status of university. These statuses can be granted to an HEI that meets all the legal requirements for conducting educational and research activities. Thus, the state accreditation procedure legally establishes a mechanism for motivating HEIs to further develop their activities and thus raise their status. State-accredited HEIs are entitled to award diplomas in the state format and to use the official seal bearing the national symbols. State accreditation also provides certain other rights and benefits that are of vital importance to the private sector, allowing non-state institutions to operate on equal terms with state HEIs. A HEI has to reconfirm its state accreditation status every 6 years.

At present the task of conducting the state accreditation is assigned to the Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science (Rosobrnadzor) and its subordinate organization: the National Accreditation Agency (NAA). Rosobrnadzor controls the performance of educational institutions and regional education authorities in the Russian Federation. The National Accreditation Agency (NAA) is responsible for informational and methodological support of the state accreditation procedure. The NAA also prepares final reports on the quality of the institutions to be accredited for the members of the Accreditation Board and collects information and analyses on the activities of HEIs. It is also responsible for nominating and selecting experts for external expert panels and for evaluating the quality of graduates' training and education.

Public accreditation procedures are not mandatory for HEIs and presuppose external institutional and program reviews by experts representing sectoral employers' associations, academic and student communities in relating study fields. Under the new legislation of the Russian Federation, public accreditation of study programs can be provided by organizations established by public (non-governmental) or professional associations and unions. Public accreditation does not award higher educational institutions with the same rights and privileges as is the case for state accreditation but it raises the expectations public organizations and employers have regarding study programs. This can contribute to the prestige of accredited programs, to their attractiveness for prospective students as well as to their relevance from the perspective of employers.

At present, five accreditation agencies are working on the Russian territory, each in their own special field. The National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) accredits study programs which have been identified by the public as best educational programs. The Accreditation Centre of the Russian Association for Engineering Education cooperates with domestic, foreign and international organizations working in engineering education towards integration into the European system of quality assurance in engineering education. The Centre for Public Accreditation of Law Education was established together with the non-profit Association of Law Education. The mission of this Centre is to assess the quality of law programs in HEIs. The Law Academy at the Moscow State University also offers accreditation of Law programs. AKKORK (Agency for Higher Education, Quality Assurance and Career Development) carries out accreditation of both institutions and programs, and it participates in the joint accreditation and certification of e-learning.

Since 2013 NCPA has been one of the founding members of the National Public Register of Accrediting Organizations in Education (NPRAO). All bodies and organizations involved in the process of higher education quality assurance have a legally established basis and work in accordance with the Russian legislation.

NCPA

In 1995 the first Russian state accreditation agency was established in Yoshkar-Ola: the National Accreditation Agency (NAA). This organisation was founded by the current coordinators of NCPA. Also some NCPA staff members were involved in NAA. Nowadays, NAA is established in Moscow and has no formal ties with NCPA. The Presidents of the Russian Federation Decree of 26 May 2009 №599 on the necessity for developing and introducing public and professional accreditation of higher educational programs served as the reason and impetus for creating NCPA. Another reason was the external evaluation of the National Accreditation Agency (NAA, established in Yoshkar-Ola in 1995). The external evaluation was conducted in 2008 according to ESG-ENQA, and as a result NAA was granted a full member status in ENQA. However, the external evaluation panel made a few important recommendations which were hard to realize for NAA as it was part of the state quality assurance system. On the initiative of the Guild of Experts in the field of professional education a new independent quality assurance agency - the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) was established, which set as a goal to not only change the accreditation technology but also to change the philosophy of quality assurance.

NCPA's SER mentions that since 2009, a trend to strengthen control and inspection in Russian education has become evident because there have been recurrent cases of selling higher education diplomas, falsification of the educational process and corruption. At the same time, taking control and inspection in education as the main goal of Rosobrnadzor, the function of state accreditation was being transformed in terms of content and procedure into a function of state control. State accreditation as a motivation mechanism has exhausted its potential: almost all Russian HEIs are now

state accredited and granting an HEI a higher status is beyond the scope of state accreditation. NCPA substantiates in its SER that state accreditation takes into consideration only minimum threshold standards, and all the procedures and decisions depend on the state body. It is said by NCPA that the requirements to experts are minimal, students and employers are not involved in the system of quality assurance.

The National Guild of Experts in Higher Education took the initiative to establish NCPA as a new accreditation agency. This initiative was supported by the Centre for Training and Consultancy, the journal "Accreditation in Education" and the Scientific and Research Institute of the Education Quality Monitoring, who acted as the founders of the National Centre for Public Accreditation.

The Centre was created to fulfil two main objectives: firstly the harmonization of the QA methodology with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-ENQA) and their implementation into the QA practice in Russia. Secondly, the HE quality enhancement and the promotion of a quality improvement culture based on motivation mechanisms and best national and international practices.

Initially there were three main tasks: firstly, developing all necessary documentation for initiating the accreditation procedure (Standards and Criteria for Public Accreditation, Guidelines for External Review of Educational Programs, Code of Ethics for Members of External Review Panels, etc.). Secondly, implementing the project "The Best Educational Programs of Innovative Russia" in order to obtain expert evaluations of higher education study programs. By now, there have been already four rounds of the project. Thirdly, active cooperation with international networks and associations for nominating experts in external panels. Since 2011, the public accreditation procedure has been conducted on a regular basis.

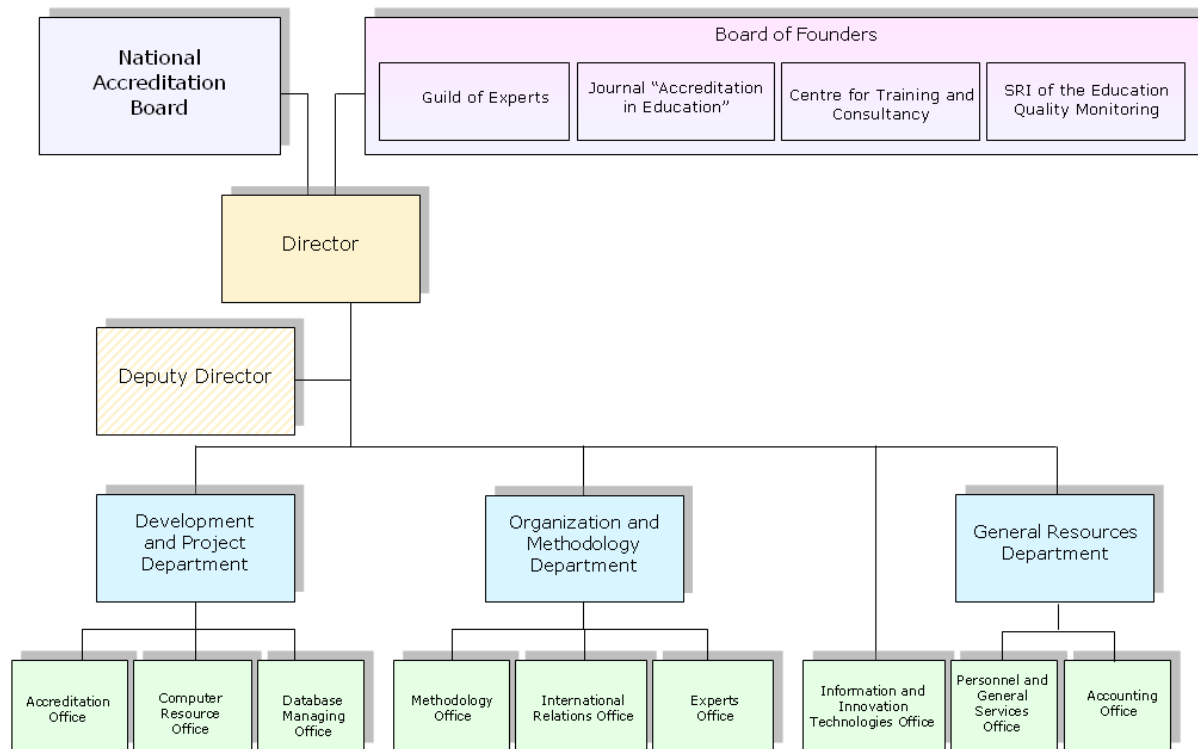
The areas of NCPA's activity

NCPA is an autonomous non-profit organization that wants to perform its functions in compliance with its Statutes and strategic plan of development. These documents determine the directions of NCPA's activities.

NCPA's Objectives:

- Develop and implement quality standards for higher education programs in compliance with ESG-ENQA.
- Enhance the quality of education and form a quality culture in higher education institutions.
- Determine the best practice in continuous enhancement of the education quality.
- Form a positive public opinion in Russia and abroad about the higher education institutions.
- Provide multi-faceted engagement of the academic community, employers, and international experts in evaluation procedures.
- Ensure public provision of information about the quality of educational programs delivered by higher education institutions (HEIs).

Structure of NCPA



The Board of NCPA is composed of the four founders of the organization: The Guild of Experts, the journal ‘Accreditation in Education’, the Centre for training and Consultancy and Scientific and Research Institute of the Education Quality Monitoring.

The Guild of Experts is an independent public organization, which was established in 2006. This organisation took the lead in founding NCPA. At present there are 970 experts in professional education from all over Russia including 690 rectors, vice-rectors of HEIs, directors, and deputy directors of the branches of HEIs. As part of the agreement between NCPA and the Guild of Experts in the field of Professional Education the Centre selects experts for external reviews. Every year about 150 people receive special training and certification by the Guild of Experts. The guild of experts took also part in the design of the new law on education.

The journal “Accreditation in Education” is a Russian information and analytical periodical covering a wide range of subjects relating to the quality of education in Russia and internationally. The journal provides a platform for opinion exchange and discussion of urgent issues by leaders and representatives of federal and regional state authorities, education institutions of all types, manufacturing companies and public organizations. The journal is published 8 times a year, and has a circulation of 3000 copies. The journal is published with an active participation of NCPA. The deputy director of NCPA is the editor in chief of the journal.

Since 2003 the **Centre for Training and Consultancy (CTC)** is licensed consultancy and training on further education. NCPA together with the Centre for Training and Consultancy carry out the training of experts who take part in the procedure of public accreditation. The leading staff of NCPA is involved in this centre. There is no official merger between this centre and NCPA. This because of the special license a training centre has to obtain before it can be operational. In fact they are closely entwined.

CTC is NCPA’s partner in implementing the following tasks:

- to promote the development of public accreditation by way of organizing and conducting training courses, seminars and webinars on the issues of public accreditation, quality assurance of HEIs, and educational policy;

- provide information support of HE management and specialists in QA on the issues of public accreditation and internal quality assurance systems through their education and training;
- develop and publish instruction and methodological materials, guidance and coach books on the issues of state and public accreditation of study programs, QA of higher education.
- carry out education and training of experts for state and public accreditation;
- disseminate information on good practice with a view of promoting openness, transparency and mutual trust in the field of quality assurance.

The **Scientific and Research Institute of the Education Quality Monitoring** is a supporting body in the field of higher education. The institute provides, for instance, the technological support of the on-line testing tool “the Federal Internet Exam in the Sphere of Professional Education”. This project has been implemented since 2005 and is aimed at the external assessment of students’ outcomes in order to evaluate their compliance with the Federal State Educational Standards (www.i-exam.ru). Annually more than 700 educational institutions take part in the project. Over 1 million test sessions are conducted during the academic semester.

National Accreditation Board (NAB) isn’t a member of the Board of Founders. This NAB is composed of 25 members composed of representatives of legislative bodies of the Russian Federation, Rectors and Presidents of the Russian leading HEIs, prominent scholars, representatives of professional and student associations. The nominees to the Board were approved at the National Conference of the Guild of Experts. The members are elected at the general meeting of the founders. The NAB acts independent from NCPA and is responsible for granting accreditation to the programs that were evaluated by external panels of NCPA.

The Centre itself is headed by the Director; the management of NCPA also includes a deputy director, and the chief accountant. The Centre comprises 3 divisions (8 structural units), Information Technologies and Telecommunications Office, Personnel and General Services Office - in accordance with the functions fulfilled by NCPA.

The Best Educational Programs of Innovative Russia

To fully grasp the process of evaluation and accreditation, the panel considers it necessary to elaborate on the ‘best Educational Programs of Innovative Russia’. Before a program can be evaluated by NCPA, it must meet certain conditions.

In accordance with “The Regulations on Public Accreditation” the priority right for public accreditation by NCPA belongs to the educational programs which have been recognized by professional associations, academic and research communities and listed in the Reference book “The Best Educational Programs of Innovative Russia”. Only these programs can be reviewed by NCPA.

Since 2010 NCPA in cooperation with the National Guild of Experts in the Sphere of Professional Education, and the publishing house ‘Accreditation in Education’ have been carrying out the project “The Best Educational Programs of Innovative Russia”.

One of the main purposes of the project is to evaluate the quality of the educational programs offered by the Russian HEIs through internet surveys of educationalists, members of the academic community, employers and other stakeholders. The programs which receive the majority of the stakeholders’ votes become winners of the project. Only 6-7% of the higher educational programs delivered in Russia get to be listed in the reference book.

When applying for public accreditation a HEI should observe the following conditions:

- Educational programs undergoing accreditation should have state accreditation (compliance with the FSES);
- Educational program(s) should be listed among the best educational programs.

When a HEI makes a decision to have an external review of a program (or a cluster of programs) coordinated by NCPA the first step is to send a written application signed by the head of the educational institution to the Director of NCPA. After the application is filed a coordinator of the review is appointed from among the members of NCPA staff.

Compliance of NCPA with the Part 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

The following judgments are based on the self-evaluation document, analysis of additional documents and the NCPA website and on the interviews during the site visit (the schedule is attached in Annex 1). The panel supports NCPA's ambition to become a full member of ENQA and is convinced that this membership will allow the agency to play an important role in the enhancement of HE in Russia and to play an active role in the European Higher Education Area.

ENQA Criterion 1

ESG 3.1 - Part 2: External quality assurance processes

STANDARD:

The external quality assurance agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance procedures described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

GUIDELINES:

The standards for external quality assurance contained in Part 2 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. The standards reflect best practices and experiences gained through the development of external quality assurance in Europe since the early 1990s. It is therefore important that these standards are integrated into the processes applied by external quality assurance agencies towards the higher education institutions. The standards for external quality assurance should together with the standards for external quality assurance agencies constitute the basis for professional and credible external quality assurance of higher education institutions.

Compliance with the standards of Part 2 of the ESG is addressed in the following sections. Compliance with these standards is only relevant with regard to the overall compliance with standard 3.1.

ESG 2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures

STANDARD:

External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

GUIDELINES:

The standards for internal quality assurance contained in Part 1 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. It is important that the institutions' own internal policies and procedures are carefully evaluated in the course of external procedures, to determine the extent to which the standards are being met. If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.

Findings of the panel

NCPA evaluates programs and clusters of programs based on the HEI's self-evaluation and on an external evaluation done by an expert panel. In case of an evaluation of a cluster of programs, these clusters consist of two or more programs in the same domain in a single HEI. The NCPA writing procedures for the self-evaluation report are described in detail in the 'Regulations on Public Accreditation of an Educational Program (a Cluster of Programs) of Higher, Secondary Vocational and Further Education'.

NCPA's procedures assure that expert panels take the presence and effectiveness of the inner quality assurance mechanisms into account. These mechanisms are used to evaluate the competences of the teaching staff, the efficiency of the institutional governance, the assessment of student learning

outcomes, resource management and other aspects of a HEI program. However, when developing its own procedures, standards and criteria, NCPA was guided by the ‘Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area’. The ENQA panel could identify the ESG part 1 completely in NCPA’s external quality assurance procedures. This proves that they take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes.

Moreover, in 2005 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area were translated into Russian and recommended for implementation into the inner HEI quality assurance systems. NCPA informs the Russian HEI about the European Standards and Guidelines through its website, its publications in the journal “Accreditation in Education”, and also at its conferences and workshops where international quality assurance experts are invited.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 2.1.

ESG 2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes

STANDARD:

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

GUIDELINES:

In order to ensure clarity of purpose and transparency of procedures, external quality assurance methods should be designed and developed through a process involving key stakeholders, including higher education institutions. The procedures that are finally agreed should be published and should contain explicit statements of the aims and objectives of the processes as well as a description of the procedures to be used. As external quality assurance makes demands on the institutions involved a preliminary impact assessment should be undertaken to ensure that the procedures to be adopted are appropriate and do not interfere more than necessary with the normal work of higher education institutions.

Findings of the panel

As mentioned in ESG 2.1, the standards and criteria for public accreditation are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-ENQA). In addition, these standards include some additional criteria, which allows the adjustment of standards to the Russian HE context. The public accreditation procedure has been developed with regard to the national system of education. Attention is paid to assure that these criteria do not interfere with the education process.

The procedure of public accreditation of educational programs has been developed by NCPA in 2009. Initially, the developed documents were discussed by quality assurance experts such as rectors and vice-rectors, directors and deputy directors of different HEI branches. In 2011, the procedures were discussed at ‘The Sixth Annual Conference of Experts in Higher Education’, organised by the Guild of Experts (see p. 12). In order to improve these procedures, they were revised by representatives of academic community and professional associations. The ENQA panel learned that the last revision of the procedures was done in 2012 by the National Accreditation Board. The ENQA panel confirms that all these documents concerning aims and objectives of quality assurance processes are public and accessible on the NCPA website.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 2.2.

ESG 2.3 - Criteria for decisions

STANDARD:

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

GUIDELINES:

Formal decisions made by quality assurance agencies have a significant impact on the institutions and programs that are judged. In the interests of equity and reliability, decisions should be based on published criteria and interpreted in a consistent manner. Conclusions should be based on recorded evidence and agencies should have in place ways of moderating conclusions, if necessary.

Findings of the panel

As indicated by the ENQA panel in ESG 2.1. and 2.2., all NCPA's regulatory and normative documents used in the public accreditation procedures have been discussed and approved at the conferences of the Guild of Experts by representatives of the academic community and by professional and student associations. The National Accreditation Board approved these procedures too.

In order to maintain justice and credibility, all formal decisions which are made as a result of public accreditation, are based on quite clearly defined and publicly available criteria. Based on the self-evaluation report, documentary evidence and interviews with representatives of professional associations, students, teaching staff and the HEI management, the external evaluation panels decide on the degree of compliance of an educational program to NCPA's standards and criteria. Although the criteria are clear, the ENQA panel learned in its interviews that foreign experts interpret the criteria more stringent than the Russian experts. This is explained by the fact that most foreign experts come from countries where the quality culture is more developed. In each panel, there are both Russian and foreign experts. All experts are trained at the beginning of each evaluation process. These training sessions include both a procedural and a substantive training.

The expert panels' reports are published on the NCPA website. Every expert panel makes final recommendations concerning the accreditation term. Nevertheless, the final conclusion of the expert panel is not binding. Subsequently, the NCPA staff prepares a summary report for the National Accreditation Board. This summary report is based on the analysis of the self-evaluation report, the final report by the external evaluation panel and on some additional information obtained from the HEI. The ENQA panel studied the reports and summaries, and is convinced that the summary report provides a good reflection on the findings of the expert panel.

Based on the considerations in the summary report, the National Accreditation Board makes a collegiate positive or negative decision. A program can be accredited for the full term of 6 years or for a part term (less than 6 years). The National Accreditation Board decides independently, based on the criteria, on the accreditation and on the accreditation term. To date, the National Accreditation Board granted a part term accreditation in some cases where the expert panel recommended a full term accreditation. There are no exact criteria for awarding the limited term of accreditation. The Board decides whether an accreditation for one, two or three years is granted. The reasoning behind these decisions are not always clear to the expert panels in charge of the external evaluation reports. Until now, there has not been any refusals of accreditation. Due to the system of selecting the best programs (see p. 13.), only the programs that already have achieved a certain level of quality can participate in the evaluation.

The report that is published on the NCPA website only mentions the accreditation advice by the expert panel. The ENQA panel recommends that the final accreditation period -decided by the NAB - should be published either in the report itself or on the webpage where the report is published.

Recommendations

Clarify the procedure and criteria for granting limited accreditation (1, 2 or 3 years)

Provide feedback on the accreditation decision to the expert panels

Publish the accreditation decision on the website

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA substantially complies with ESG 2.3.

ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose

STANDARD:

All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

GUIDELINES:

Quality assurance agencies within the EHEA undertake different external processes for different purposes and in different ways. It is of the first importance that agencies should operate procedures which are fit for their own defined and published purposes. Experience has shown, however, that there are some widely-used elements of external review processes which not only help to ensure their validity, reliability and usefulness, but also provide a basis for the European dimension to quality assurance. Amongst these elements the following are particularly noteworthy:

- insistence that the experts undertaking the external quality assurance activity have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task;
- the exercise of care in the selection of experts;
- the provision of appropriate briefing or training for experts;
- the use of international experts;
- participation of students;
- ensuring that the review procedures used are sufficient to provide adequate evidence to support the findings and conclusions reached;
- the use of the self-evaluation/site visit/draft report/published report/follow-up model of review;
- recognition of the importance of institutional improvement and enhancement policies as a fundamental element in the assurance of quality

Findings of the panel

The ENQA panel found evidence that public accreditation by NCPA is aimed at enhancing the quality of education and at creating a quality culture in HEI. NCPA tries to achieve this by identifying best practices in quality assurance and by informing the public about the quality of the programs. As mentioned, the documents regulating the procedure of public accreditation were developed with the participation of different stakeholders. Members of the Guild of Experts, representatives of professional associations, representatives of state executive bodies and members of the National Accreditation Board participated in the discussions and consultations. All stages of the public accreditation procedure (self-evaluation report, selection of external experts, a site-visit, and preparation of the report by the external expert panel) are intended to achieve an objective independent assessment.

It is NCPA's opinion that one of the preconditions for public accreditation eligibility of an educational program, is its recognition by professional and academic communities as the best program on the basis of the project "The Best Educational Programs of Innovative Russia" (see p. 13).

As part of the agreement between NCPA and the Guild of Experts, they select experts for external reviews. Experts are drawn from the members of the academic community and professional and student associations. The following factors are considered in the selection process: the work experience in higher education, academic credentials and area of expertise. As a rule, all the experts are certified experts. Panels are composed of five members: one member of the Russian academic community, two European or Asian members, a student member and a representative of the (local) labor market. This representative has to focus on whether the study program(s) under review and the professional competences of its graduates comply with the labour market requirements. Student members are mostly selected among representatives of the student associations. The student member is asked to focus on the compliance between the study programs under review and students needs and expectations. NCPA cooperates with several international accreditation agencies which nominate NCPA's international experts for external evaluation. Thus, since 2011, experts from 17 countries participated in external evaluation panels.

Prior to the site-visit, all members of the external evaluation panel have a briefing session to discuss procedures, rights and responsibilities. The ENQA panel noted from the interviews that the briefings are rather brief. Members of the expert panels are in favour of more detailed briefings. The Guild of experts organises annual seminars for panel members on "Implementing European Standards and Guidelines in the Russian Quality Assurance Systems" as a form of "on-going briefing" for the members. Every year about 150 people receive special training and certification by the Guild of Experts. Nevertheless new experts feel the need for an more extensive training, especially the international experts.

The representatives of the institutions with whom the ENQA panel has spoken, all indicate that they perceive the review model as adequate. It is their opinion that the interaction with the reviewers is satisfactory. The ENQA panel heard in its interviews with all stakeholders that reports are evidence-based: the expert panel's findings and subsequent conclusions are supported by what they learn from the self-evaluation reports, additional background information and the interviews during the site visit. NCPA publishes the reports and encourages the HEI to disseminate them. The HEI are willing to undergo these evaluations as designed by NCPA. The representatives of HEI are convinced that these evaluations can improve their connection with the European HEI in Europe.

Recommendations

Improve the briefing of experts before the site visit (especially for the student members and members of labor market).

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 2.4.

ESG 2.5 Reporting

STANDARD:

Reports should be published and should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

GUIDELINES:

In order to ensure maximum benefit from external quality assurance processes, it is important that reports should meet the identified needs of the intended readership. Reports are sometimes intended for different readership groups and this will require careful attention to structure, content, style and tone. In general, reports should be structured to cover description, analysis (including relevant evidence), conclusions, commendations, and recommendations. There should be sufficient preliminary explanation to enable a lay reader to understand the purposes of the review, its form, and the criteria used in making decisions. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations should be

easily locatable by readers. Reports should be published in a readily accessible form and there should be opportunities for readers and users of the reports (both within the relevant institution and outside it) to comment on their usefulness.

Findings of the panel

The summary reports of the expert panels are published on the NCPA website in Russian and in English. The entire report is published in Russian. The structure of the self-evaluation report is described in the Guidelines for External Reviews of Educational Programs and Guidelines for Self-Evaluation of Educational Programs and follows a defined format. On its website, NCPA publishes the list of accredited programs which includes the general program information and the names of external review panel members.

The ENQA panel has read the reports on NCPA's website. It is clear that these reports are intended to cover description, analysis (including relevant evidence), conclusions, commendations and recommendations. There is sufficient preliminary explanation to enable a lay reader to understand the purposes of the review, its form and the criteria used in making decisions. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations are easily locatable by readers.

NCPA pays close attention to the public access to the reports because NCPA considers these reports as an incentive to bring the best programs to the attention of a broader public. The ENQA panel has learned this is perceived in the same way by the participating institutions.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 2.5.

[ESG 2.6 Follow-up procedures](#)

STANDARD:

Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.
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GUIDELINES:

Quality assurance is not principally about individual external scrutiny events: It should be about continuously trying to do a better job. External quality assurance does not end with the publication of the report and should include a structured follow-up procedure to ensure that recommendations are dealt with appropriately and any required action plans drawn up and implemented. This may involve further meetings with institutional or program representatives. The objective is to ensure that areas identified for improvement are dealt with speedily and that further enhancement is encouraged.

Findings of the panel

NCPA emphasizes the voluntary and optional character of the public accreditation procedure. A denial of accreditation does not result in the termination of the program. As a consequence of public accreditation, NCPA believes that implementing recommendations is the responsibility of the HEI.

When deficits are defined by the expert panels, they make recommendations. The HEI can implement these recommendations in a two year time frame. After two years NCPA asks the HEI's to write a substantiated report on the implementation of the recommendations made by the external evaluation panel. Nevertheless, this is not compulsory.

In case of a short-term accreditation (less than six years) or when the term expires, the HEI has the right to submit a report with improvements. Subsequently, the National Accreditation Board can make a decision on the renewal of accreditation period.

Given the importance that all parties concerned attach to the improvement functions, the ENQA panel considers that the follow-up procedures are not very clearly regulated. Some form of monitoring at a system level seems desirable. On the other hand, as public accreditation is not compulsory in Russia, the ENQA panel takes into account the reasoning followed by NCPA that no institution can be obliged to undergo a (second) external evaluation or other compulsory follow-up measures.

Recommendations:

Design clearer follow-up procedures.

Regulate follow-up procedures in the evaluation contract signed with the university.

Set up a process to encourage follow-up demands

Provide feedback on the accreditation procedures to the evaluated universities

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA substantially complies with ESG 2.6.

ESG 2.7 Periodic reviews

STANDARD:

External quality assurance of institutions and/or programs should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

GUIDELINES:

Quality assurance is not a static but a dynamic process. It should be continuous and not “once in a lifetime”. It does not end with the first review or with the completion of the formal follow-up procedure. It has to be periodically renewed. Subsequent external reviews should take into account progress that has been made since the previous event. The process to be used in all external reviews should be clearly defined by the external quality assurance agency and its demands on institutions should not be greater than are necessary for the achievement of its objectives.

Findings of the panel

According to NCPA’s regulations and procedures, external evaluation is conducted on a regular basis. An accredited program can undergo a second accreditation after 6 years. The National Accreditation Board can decide to grant an accreditation period being less than 6 years in case of partial compliance with the standards. As mentioned in ESG 2.6, NCPA emphasizes the voluntary and optional character of the public accreditation procedure. For instance, a denial of accreditation is not followed by the termination of an educational program.

Based on the interviews of the ENQA panel with representatives of HEI, it is clear that the HEI, irrespective of whether they have received full or limited accreditation, demonstrate willingness to undergo a new external evaluation when the current accreditation period has expired.

Recommendations

Increase the impact of external evaluation results in order to encourage universities to be re-evaluated.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA substantially complies with ESG 2.7.

ESG 2.8 System-wide analyses

STANDARD:

Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

GUIDELINES:

All external quality assurance agencies collect a wealth of information about individual programs and/or institutions and this provides material for structured analyses across whole higher education systems.

Such analyses can provide very useful information about developments, trends, emerging good practice and areas of persistent difficulty or weakness and can become useful tools for policy development and quality enhancement. Agencies should consider including a research and development function within their activities, to help them extract maximum benefit from their work.

Findings of the panel

NCPA produces and publishes an annual analytical report which shows the results of past years work. This report shows evidence on the programs under review, the accreditation decisions, the training courses for experts and staff of HEIs, the international cooperation and on public relations. The review analyses the current situation in the HE system in the Russian Federation and the activity of higher education and secondary education institutions, the tendencies in the development of state and public accreditation and good practice in the international quality assurance. NCPA publishes materials on best practices in the internal and external quality assurance systems. This is published in the journal “Accreditation in Education” and presented in the proceedings of the annual conference of experts.

NCPA carries out research, both quantitatively and qualitatively, on quality assurance in education. This is mostly done in cooperation with the member organisations of the Board of Founders. The research results are published in articles and monographs. The leading staff members of NCPA supervise post graduate students who are conducting research on procedures of quality assurance used by the Agency. The Director of NCPA leads the research school in the quality assurance of education. Under his supervision, 4 doctorate and 6 candidate of science dissertations have been defended.

The ENQA panel is convinced that NCPA is highly embedded in the network of its Board of Founders where a large exchange of findings on their evaluations takes place.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 2.8.

Findings of the panel in relation to ESG 3.1

NCPA complies fully with ESG 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.8.

NCPA complies substantially with ESG 2.3, 2.6 and 2.7.

Although the panel indicates some smaller areas for improvement in relation to Part 2 of the ESG, some questions resulting from the position of “public accreditation process” into the Russian HE system, the panel is convinced that the external quality assurance activities of the agency take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines satisfactorily.

Conclusion on ESG 3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education

The panel concludes that NCPA substantially complies with ESG 3.1.

ESG 3.3: Activities

STANDARD:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or program level) on a regular basis.

GUIDELINES:

These may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the agency.

Findings of the panel

NCPA carries out external quality assurance of programs. An expert panel evaluates either a program or a cluster of programs: institutions may opt for an evaluation of different programs in the same field expertise by the same expert panel.

As of 1 October 2013, NCPA has carried out the external evaluation of 95 educational programs - 80 programs of higher education, 13 programs of further education, and 2 post-graduate programs, offered by 13 educational institutions of the Russian Federation. 143 experts (including 51 international experts from 17 countries) have participated in the evaluations. Next to that, NCPA carries out a yearly independent public evaluation of the quality of higher educational programs in the framework of the national project “The Best Educational Programs of Innovative Russia” (see p. 13).

As mentioned before, the ENQA panel found evidence that NCPA maintains informational openness and transparency of the public accreditation system through the publication of the reports on the outcomes of external evaluation procedures; analytical materials prepared for the National Accreditation Board and through the ‘Register of the accredited programs’ on the NCPA website. NCPA’s aim to be a centre of excellence is highly supported by the ENQA panel. The ENQA panel would like to warn NCPA about their goal to provide more consultancy services. At all time, it is impermissible consult and evaluate a single program.

Recommendation

Define the boundaries of consultancy and set up regulations allowing to separate clearly public accreditation and consultancy.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 3.3.

Conclusion on ENQA Criterion 1

Taking into account that NCPA substantially complies with ESG 3.1 and that NCPA fully complies with ESG 3.3, the panel concludes that NCPA substantially complies with ENQA criterion 1.

ENQA criterion 2 / ESG 3.2: Official status

STANDARD:

Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

Findings of the panel

NCPA is an autonomous non-profit organization which has an official status in the Russian Federation. NCPA was established by the general meeting of the founders on the 7th of December 2009 and registered by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation on the 26th of January 2010. The statutes of NCPA were approved at the general meeting of the founders on the 7th of December 2009.

The legal status of NCPA the rights and responsibilities of the founders are determined by the statutes, and to the extent not regulated by it, the centre is governed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, by the Civil Code of the Russian Federation, the Federal Law “On the non-for profit organizations”, the Russian Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation”, the Federal Law “On higher and post-graduate education”, and other legal and normative acts, international agreements in the field of education, where Russia is a participant.

The ENQA panel learned that NCPA has cooperation agreements with relevant ministries and departments; with professional associations, employers’ associations; with Federal Universities and with independent educational and research organizations. Since 2013, NCPA has been one of the founding members of the National Public Register of Accrediting Organizations in Education in Russia (NPRO).

NCPA is also a member of international networks of quality assurance agencies: a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE); a full member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA); a full member of the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN); a full member of the Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence (IREG) and an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 3.2, and thus fully complies with ENQA Criterion 2.

ENQA criterion 3 / ESG 3.4: Resources

STANDARD:

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

Findings of the panel

NCPA operates on a non-profit basis. It is mainly funded by fees from participating institutions who commission coordinated evaluations. Other sources of income are the fees paid by HEIs for educational projects and activities. In 2012 and 2013, NCPA’s budget came respectively up to 29.924.200 and 22.748.000 roubles.

NCPA’s staff (41 people) includes full time (30) and part time (11 including 6 students) personnel. The number of employees is growing proportionally to the growth of NCPA’s scope and workload. Since 2012, they hired an additional 17ft and 5pt employees. The ENQA panel also found evidence that the accommodation and IT facilities are appropriate to enable the staff in fulfilling their responsibilities.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 3.4, and thus fully complies with ENQA Criterion 3.

ENQA criterion 4 / ESG 3.5: Mission statement

STANDARD:

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

GUIDELINES:

These statements should describe the goals and objectives of agencies' quality assurance processes, the division of labour with relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the cultural and historical context of their work. The statements should make clear that the external quality assurance process is a major activity of the agency and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. There should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statements are translated into a clear policy and management plan.

Findings of the panel

It is NCPA's mission in the Russian system of quality assurance to form and promote quality culture in higher education through identification, evaluation, and accreditation of the best educational programs and this in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-ENQA).

The ENQA panel considers NCPA's mission statement as clear, well defined and focused on their work objectives. The goals and objectives of NCPA are described in their 'Strategic Plan of development' and in annual action plans. In order to fulfil its goals and objectives, NCPA has a clearly defined organizational structure, an approved staffing schedule and a human resource administration plan. The ENQA panel had a detailed look at all these documents and is convinced that NCPA has the potential to play a key role in the innovation of quality (assurance) in the higher education programs in Russia.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 3.5, and thus fully complies with ENQA Criterion 4.

ENQA criterion 5 / ESG 3.6: Independence

STANDARD:

Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

GUIDELINES:

An agency will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as

- its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts);

- the definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence;
- while relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.

Findings of the panel

NCPA is an independent body which bears autonomous responsibility for its actions. The ENQA panel determines NCPA's independence which is characterised by its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments. This operational independence is guaranteed by the "procedure of public accreditation of study programs of educational institutions in Russia".

The accreditation decision is made by the National Accreditation Board on the basis of analytical data, the self-evaluation report and the report of an expert panel. The definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance procedures are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions and organs of political influence.

The outcome of the quality evaluation processes, presented in the format of a summary report, are prepared by NCPA without any external influence. The reports are taken into consideration by the National Accreditation Board. As the SER mentions, this National Accreditation Board is composed of 25 members such as representatives of legislative bodies of the Russian Federation, Rectors and Presidents of the Russian leading HEIs, prominent scholars and representatives of professional and student associations. The nominees to the Board were approved at the National Conference of the Guild of Experts. (See p. 12).

Based on its interviews with the National Accreditation Board and the NCPA coordinators, the ENQA panel has learned that there are no current rectors and presidents of HEI in the NAB. Nevertheless, the ENQA panel advises NCPA to provide a 'code of ethics' with the conditions that members of the NAB must meet. NCPA has already a 'Code of Ethics for Members of External Review'. This document provides the conditions that must be met by the members of the Board.

The ENQA panel concludes that NCPA bears full responsibility for the credibility of the accreditation procedures and its final outcomes. The decision on public accreditation is made by an independent and collegiate body: the National Accreditation Board.

Recommendations

Formalize the independence of the NAB in a 'code of ethics'

Provide more transparency in the selection of National Accreditation Board members

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 3.6, and thus fully complies with ENQA Criterion 5.

ENQA Criterion 6 / ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies

STANDARD:

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

GUIDELINES:

Agencies may develop and use other processes and procedures for particular purposes.

Agencies should pay careful attention to their declared principles at all times, and ensure both that their requirements and processes are managed professionally and that their conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even though the decisions are formed by groups of different people.

Agencies that make formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.

Findings of the panel

External evaluation procedures used by NCPA conform to the current legislation of the Russian Federation on education (the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation”, the Federal law “On Higher and Post-graduate Education”, the Regulations “On the state accreditation of a higher education institution” of 21 March 2011 №184 , Regulations on Public Accreditation of an Educational Program (a Cluster of Programs) of Higher, Secondary Vocational and Further Education, Standards and Criteria for Public Accreditation, the Bologna Principles, and in particular, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-ENQA).

NCPA’s Standards and Criteria for Public Accreditation are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-ENQA). However, they take into consideration specific features of the Russian education system. Next to the ESG-ENQA, NCPA’s standards include sets of criteria. These criteria allow to integrate the procedure of public accreditation into the HEI’s internal QA system. Thus, they ensure consistency and coherence of decision making.

The ENQA panel learned that NCPA has experience in developing special standards and criteria in cooperation with the European Association of Conservatoires within the project of joint public accreditation of Russian musical higher educational institutions.

The processes, criteria and procedures used by NCPA are always defined by the agency and published on the website prior to each evaluation. The procedure of HEI accreditation includes self-evaluation, external evaluation and a site visit (each evaluation panel includes experts from academic, professional and student communities), the preparation of the final report, a summary and an accreditation decision by the National Accreditation Board. Afterwards, NCPA publishes the report on its website. As previously stated, public accreditation is not compulsory in Russia. Consequently, the ENQA panel takes into account the reasoning followed by NCPA that no institution can be obliged to undergo a (second) external evaluation or other compulsory follow up measures.

NCPA has an appeals procedure in place. An Appeals Committee was established in accordance with the ‘Regulations on the Appeals Committee’, approved by the National Accreditation Board. It was established in order to provide greater objectivity and feasibility on public accreditation decisions. The Appeals Committee is composed of some members of the National Accreditation Board. The Appeals Committee considers appeals from educational institutions and makes a decision on appeals in accordance with the “Regulations on the Appeals Procedure”.

The ‘Regulations on the Appeals Procedure’ and the ‘Regulations on the Appeals Committee’ have been discussed by the representatives of academic, professional and students communities at the conferences organized by the Guild of Experts and at meetings of the National Accreditation Board. The Appeals process has to ensure control over the procedures of public accreditation and its effectiveness. To date, no appeal has been submitted.

The ENQA panel points out that NPCA does not have an independent Appeals Committee as all the members of this Committee are also members of the NAB. The ENQA panel strongly recommends NPCA to establish an independent Appeals Committee which can judge without being influenced by the NAB.

Recommendations

Establish an independent Appeals Committee

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NPCA fully complies with ESG 3.7, and thus fully complies with ENQA Criterion 6.

[ENQA Criterion 7 / ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures](#)

STANDARD:

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

GUIDELINES:

These procedures are expected to include the following:

1. A published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, made available on its website;
2. Documentation which demonstrates that:
 - the agency’s processes and results reflect its mission and goals of quality assurance;
 - the agency has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts;
 - the agency has reliable mechanisms that ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance procedure are sub-contracted to other parties;
 - the agency has in place internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from its own staff and council/board); an internal reflection mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement); and an external feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from experts and reviewed institutions for future development) in order to inform and underpin its own development and improvement.
3. A mandatory cyclical external review of the agency’s activities at least once every five years.

Findings of the panel

The ENQA panel reviewed the information on the NPCA website. The website consists of several documents that underpin NPCA’s quality assurance policy. It is apparent to the ENQA panel that NPCA has a policy for internal quality assurance in place. The internal quality assurance procedures are formally described. NPCA’s mission and goals and objectives serve as a basis for the agency’s strategic and action plan. The outcomes of NPCA’s work are published in the annual analytic report which

covers the processes and procedures used by NCPA. In addition, they describe their correspondence to the mission and goals of the organization. Furthermore, NCPA has a clearly defined structure of its departments and management.

In order to increase the quality and the credibility of the experts' work on external quality assurance, NCPA developed a training and certification program. The information on certified experts is included in the database of experts, which is used when nominating expert panel members. The 'Code of Ethics for members of external review panels' comprises a non-conflict of interests mechanism. Prior to an external review, the panel members and NCPA sign a non-conflict of interest agreement. As already mentioned, the NCPA does not have a similar procedure for the members of the NAB in place.

NCPA has a system of checks and balances for its activities. E.g.: The work of the external review panel is coordinated by a representative of NCPA whose responsibility is to liaise with the institution under review and the external panel members. After the site visit, the panel members provide feedback on the conducted procedure. The experts and the HEI coordinators fill in a questionnaire whose results are discussed at the NAB.

Furthermore, the ENQA panel found evidence of internal reflection mechanisms such as regular staff meetings; briefings of the management and administration; workshops organized by NCPA; events where issues on enhancing the procedures of quality assurance are discussed; annual conferences of experts for sharing experience and good practices and satisfaction surveys of all stakeholders. The reports of NCPA's activities are submitted at meetings of the National Accreditation Board; conferences of the Guild of Experts and meetings of the Board of the Founders.

NCPA is committed to voluntarily undergo an external review every five years. This regular external evaluation will be carried out in accordance with ENQA-ESG.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ESG 3.8, and thus fully complies with ENQA Criterion 7.

ENQA criterion 8: Consistency of judgements, appeals system and contribution to ENQA aims

STANDARD

- i. The agency pays careful attention to its declared principles at all times, and ensures both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgments and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even if the judgments are formed by different groups.
- ii. If the agency makes formal quality assurance decisions or conclusions which have formal consequences, it should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of the agency.
- iii. The agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA.

Findings of the panel

Based on its discussions with different stakeholders and the documentation provide and as argued in the previous ESG-findings the ENQA panel is convinced that NCPA pays careful attention to quality improvement and the development of a quality culture in the Russian HEI. NCPA ensures both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgments and decisions are reached in a consistent manner. The National Accreditation Board plays an important role in guaranteeing consistent judgments.

NCPA's quality assurance decisions do not have any formal consequences as public accreditation is voluntary. As mentioned under ESG 3.7, the peer review panel has discussed the appeal procedures of NCPA. The Appeals Committee is composed of some members of the National Accreditation Board. The Appeals process has to ensure control over the procedures of public accreditation and its effectiveness. The ENQA panel points out that NCPA does not have an independent Appeals Committee as all the members of this Committee are also members of the NAB. The ENQA panel strongly recommends NCPA to establish an independent Appeals Committee which can judge without being influenced by the NAB. To date, no appeal has been submitted.

As mentioned before, the ENQA panel has noticed a strong support for NCPA to become a Full Member of ENQA. NCPA has the ambition to be active at the European level. NCPA representatives have an active participation in ENQA and ENQA-related conferences and events. NCPA is already an affiliate of ENQA since September 2010.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that NCPA fully complies with ENQA Criterion 8.

Conclusion and development

In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the ENQA Panel is of the opinion that, in the performance of its functions, NCPA is at least substantially compliant with the *ENQA Membership Provisions*. NCPA is, nonetheless, in the opinion of the Review Panel, sufficiently compliant to justify full membership of ENQA.

The criteria where full compliance has been achieved are ENQA criterion 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. The criterion where full compliance has not been achieved is ENQA criterion 1 and NCPA is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, to achieve full compliance with this criterion at the earliest opportunity. Most of the ENQA panel's recommendations can be linked to a more general recommendation that the NCPA procedures have to be made more transparent in order to avoid possible partiality.

Recommendations

- Clarify the procedure and criteria for granting limited accreditation (1, 2 or 3 years)
- Provide feedback on the accreditation decision to the expert panels
- Publish the accreditation decision on the website
- Improve the briefing of experts before the site visit (especially for the student members and members of labor market).
- Design clearer follow-up procedures.
- Regulate follow-up procedures in the evaluation contract signed with the university.
- Set up a process to encourage follow-up demands
- Provide feedback on the accreditation procedures to the evaluated universities
- Increase the impact of external evaluation results in order to encourage universities to be re-evaluated.
- Define the boundaries of consultancy and set up regulations allowing to separate clearly public accreditation and consultancy.
- Formalize the independence of the NAB in a 'code of ethics'
- Provide more transparency in the selection of National Accreditation Board members
- Establish an independent Appeals Committee

Annexes

Shedule of the site visite

Time	Activity	Participants		Venue
March 4, Tuesday				
Arrival in Moscow, hotel check in				Ibis Hotel
16.00 – 19.00	The first meeting of the External Review Panel members	Review Panel		Ibis Hotel
March 5, Wednesday				
08.20	Arrival at International Industrial Academy (IIA)			
08.30 – 09.00	Meeting of the Review Panel with NCPA Board	Vladimir Navodnov	D.Sc., Director, NCPA	IIA, business-centre (3 rd floor)
		Galina Motova	D.Sc., Deputy Director, NCPA; interpreter	
9.00 – 9.30	Meeting of the Review Panel with the representative of the legislative bodies in the sphere of education	Vladimir Shadrikov	D.Sc., Chair of the Expert Council of the Committee for Education of the State Duma <i>Previous positions:</i> Ex vice-minister of education of the Russian Federation (1999-2001), Head of the working group of the Federal Law "On Education" - 1992	IIA, business-centre (3 rd floor)
09.30 – 10.00	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel		IIA, business-centre (3 rd floor)
10.00 – 11.00	Meeting of the Review Panel with the members of the National Accreditation Board	Viktor Bolotov	Chair of the National Accreditation Board D.Sc., Vice-president of the Russian Academy of Education <i>Previous positions:</i> Deputy Minister and First Deputy Minister of Education of the Russian Federation, Head of the Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science, Vice-president of the Russian Academy of Education	IIA, business-centre (3 rd floor)
		Nikolay Maximov	President of the Guild of Experts D.Sc., Chair of the Coordination Board of educational associations and scientific and methodological councils of Russia	
		Nelly Rozina	Chair of the Appeals Committee Ph.D., First Vice-rector, Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation	

Time	Activity	Participants		Venue
		Irina Arzhanova	Member of the National Accreditation Board – representative of scientific community Ph.D., Executive Director, National Training Foundation	
		Dmitry Puzankov	Member of the Appeals Committee Head of the Department, Saint Petersburg Electrotechnical University "LETI" <i>Previous position:</i> Rector, Saint Petersburg Electrotechnical University "LETI", (Saint Petersburg)	
		Nikolay Zhiltsov	Member of the National Accreditation Board; Member of the Appeals Committee – representative of academic community (non-state sector) Ph.D. in Law, Ph.D. in Education, Professor Director, International Law Institute	
		Elena Soboleva	Member of the National Accreditation Board – representative of professional community Director, Department of Educational Programmes, The Foundation for Infrastructural and Educational Programmes, "ROSNANO"	
		Daria Kholodova	Member of the National Accreditation Board – representative of student community Post-graduate student, Moscow City Pedagogical University	
11.00 – 11.30	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel		IIA, business-centre (3 rd floor)
11.30 – 12.00	Meeting of the Review Panel with the representatives of the legislative bodies in the sphere of education	Alexander Degtyarev	D.Sc., Member of the State Duma Committee for Science and High Technologies <i>Previous positions:</i> Chair of the State Duma Committee for Education, Head of the working group of the Federal Law "On Education" – 2012	IIA, business-centre (3 rd floor)
		Pavel Kondrashov	Ph.D., Head of the State Duma Committee for Education	
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch	Review Panel		IIA
13.00 – 14.00	Meeting with representatives of the Guild of Experts Presidium and experts	Anatoly Kustov	Vice-President of the Guild of Experts D.Sc., Academician of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, Chair of the Department of Judicature and Organization of Law Enforcement Activity, Academy of the General Prosecutor Office of the Russian Federation	IIA, business-centre (3 rd floor)
		Vitaly Garkin	Member of the Presidium Ph.D., Vice-rector for academic affairs, Samara State University, (Samara)	
		Tatiana Litvinova	Member of the Presidium Ph.D, Head of the Department for Quality of Training, First Moscow State Medical University named after I.M. Sechenov	

Time	Activity	Participants		Venue
		Irina Borisova	Member of the Presidium Ph.D., Head of the Centre for Education Quality, Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod, (Nizhny Novgorod)	
		Rimma Akhmetsafina	Member of the Guild of Experts Ph.D., Deputy Head, Software Engineering Department, Faculty of Business Informatics, National Research University – Higher School of Economics	
		Olga Suleimanova	Member of the Guild of Experts D.Sc., Chair, Department of West-European Languages and Translation Studies, Moscow City Pedagogical University	
		Mikhail Berentgarten	Member of the Guild of Experts Ph.D., Deputy Director for academic affairs, Institute of Engineering Ecology and Chemical Mechanical Engineering, Moscow State University of Mechanical Engineering	
		Raisa Stryuk	Member of the Guild of Experts D.Sc., Head of the Department of Internal Diseases, Moscow State Medico-Stomatological University	
		Evgeny Chepurin	Member of the Guild of Experts Ph.D., Vice- Rector for Academic Affairs, State University of Land Use Planning	
		Vladimir Zabavnikov	Representative of professional community, expert Chief Expert of the Department of Educational Programmes, the Foundation for Infrastructural and Educational Programmes , “ROSNANO”	
		Aleksey Streletsky	Representative of professional community, expert Chief Expert on research and technology policy of the Group of Analytical and Expert Support, the Foundation for Infrastructural and Educational Programmes, “ROSNANO”	
		Ksenia Muslanova	Student representative Post-graduate student, Shnitke Moscow State Music Institute	
		Aleksey Egorov	Student representative Fifth year student in “Applied Mathematics and Informatics”, the National Research Nuclear University	
14.00 – 14.15	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel		IIA, business-centre (3 rd floor)
14.15 – 15.15	Meeting with the representatives (coordinators) of HEIs	Galina Mayarovskaya	Ph.D., Rector, The Gnesins Academy of Music in Moscow	IIA, business-centre (3 rd floor)
		Irina Nikulina	Ph.D., Head, Office for Major Educational Programmes, National Research University of Electronic Technology “MIET”	

Time	Activity	Participants		Venue
	evaluated by NCPA	Lyubov Dubeykovskaya	Head, Office for Studies and Methodological Work, Moscow State University of Economics, Statistics and Informatics	
		Elena Maytova	Vice-rector for academic affairs, Victor Popov Academy of Choral Arts in Moscow	
		Tatiana Kudoyarova	Ph.D., Head, Academic Office, Pushkin State Russian Language Institute	
		Anatoly Petrov	D.Sc., Rector, Russian Institute of Continuous Education in Forestry, (Pushkino)	
		Nella Pruss	Ph.D., Rector, University of Management "TISBI", (Kazan)	
		Sergey Ryzhkin	C.Med.Sc, Head, Department of Document Support and Control, Kazan State Medical University, (Kazan)	
15.15 – 16.00	Private meeting of the Review Panel, coffee-break	Review Panel		IIA
16.00	Departure to Yoshkar-Ola			
21.15	Arrival in Yoshkar-Ola, check in at "Ludoviko Moro" hotel			

Time	Activity	Participants	Venue	Time
March 6, Thursday				
09.15	Arrival at the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA)			
09.15 – 09.30	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel		NCPA, conference room
09.30 – 10.15	Excursion around the office	Review Panel		NCPA
10.15 – 11.00	Meeting with the members of "Rosakkreditatsiya" association (journal "Accreditation in Education", Research Institute for Education Quality Monitoring, Training and Consultancy Centre)	Vladimir Navodnov	D.Sc., Director, NCPA	NCPA, conference room
		Galina Motova	D.Sc., Deputy Director, NCPA	
		Valentina Kiseleva	Director General, Scientific and Research Institute of the Education Quality Monitoring	
		Ekaterina Shigapova	Director, Publishing House "Accreditation in Education"	
		Marat Gainutdinov	Deputy director, Publishing House "Accreditation in Education"	
11.00 – 11.30	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel		NCPA, conference room
11.30 – 12.30	Videoconference with HEIs evaluated by NCPA	Irina Kuksa	Ph.D., First Vice-rector – Vice-rector for academic affairs, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University (Kaliningrad)	NCPA, conference room
		Kamal Giraev	Head, International Relations Office, Dagestan State University (Makhachkala)	

Time	Activity	Participants	Venue	Time
		Lyudmila Vorozhtsova	Ph.D., Deputy First Vice-rector, Northern (Arctic) Federal University (Arkhangelsk)	
		Denis Pogonyshv	Ph.D., Vice-rector for innovative development and international activity, Nizhnevartovsk State University (Nizhnevartovsk)	
		Alexander Zyglin	D. of MS, Vice Rector for academic affairs, Bashkir State Medical University (Ufa)	
		Ivan Atanov	Ph.D., Vice-rector for education, Stavropol State Agrarian University (Stavropol)	
		Elena Krukovich	Ph.D., Vice-rector for education, Pacific State Medical University (Vladivostok)	
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch			
14.00 – 15.00	Meeting with NCPA coordinators	Petr Korotkov	Ph.D., Head, Accreditation Office	NCPA, conference room
		Oxana Matveeva	Deputy Head, Accreditation Office	
		Galina Bakumenko	Ph.D., Head, Experts Office	
		Elena Savinykh	Ph.D., Head, Methodology Office	
		Vera Chepurnykh	Ph.D., Head, International Relations Office	
		Anna Tarasova	Deputy Head, International Relations Office	
15.00 – 15.30	Private meeting of the Review Panel	Review Panel		NCPA, conference room
15.30 – 16.30	Videoconference with foreign experts	Yanis Zalkalns	D.Sc., Professor, Family Therapy Department, Stradina University (Latvia) <i>Programme reviews at:</i> Bashkir State Medical University, Pacific State Medical University, Kazan State Medical University, North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk	NCPA, conference room
		Pol Milan	D.Sc., Deputy Dean for Research and Post-Graduate Studies, Masaryk University (Czech Republic) Member of Czech Accreditation Committee <i>Programme reviews at:</i> Kozma Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University, Nizhnevartovsk State University	
		Igor Kabashkin	D.Sc., President, Institute of Transportation and Communication (Latvia) <i>Programme reviews at:</i> Northern (Arctic) Federal University (2 times)	

Time	Activity	Participants	Venue	Time
		Eduardas Gabnys	Professor, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (former Rector 2005-2011) (Lithuania) <i>Programme review at:</i> The Gnesins Academy of Music in Moscow	
		Irina Kulmoja	Ph.D., Head of the Department of Russian Linguistics, Tartu University (Estonia) <i>Programme review at:</i> Kozma Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University	
		Alfred Pitterle	Ph.D., Professor, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (Austria) <i>Programme reviews at:</i> Northern (Arctic) Federal University Stavropol State Agrarian University	
		Saule Sydykova	Ph.D., Head of the Center of Further Education, Alma-Ata State Medical Institute for Professional Advancement of Doctors (Kazakhstan) <i>Programme reviews at:</i> Bashkir State Medical University, Northern (Arctic) Federal University	
16.30 – 18.00	Private meeting of the Review Panel: summarizing preliminary results of the visit to NCPA	Review Panel		NCPA, conference room
18.00 – 18.30	Final meeting of the Review Panel with NCPA Board/Staff	Review panel, NCPA Board, NCPA staff		NCPA, conference room
18.30 – 19.30	Dinner			
19.30	Departure of the external review panel members			

Supporting Documents

Annexes to the SER

Annex 1	Statutes of NCPA
Annex 2	NCPA's Strategic plan
Annex 3	NCPA'S Action Plan for 2013 - 2014
Annex 4	The System of Internal Quality Assurance
Annex 5	The Survey Analysis of the experts, who participated in the external evaluation (the mechanism of external feedback)
Annex 6	Project "The Best Educational Programmes of Innovative Russia"
Annex 7	The Corrector-NCPA system
Annex 8	Statistical report of the NCPA on accreditation procedures for the period of 2010-2013
Annex 9	Guidelines for preparation of a report on the results of corrective actions
Annex 10	Federal state educational standards in the Russian Federation: structure and Content
Annex 11	Cooperation agreements of the NCPA
Annex 12	Compliance of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-ENQA) with the current legislation on education of the Russian Federation

Additional information requested from NCPA before the site visit:

Analitic review 2012-2013 (Russian)

Report external review of the study programmes in Linguistics delivered by the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University (Russian and English)

External Review of Educational Programmes in Academic Choir Conducting, delivered by the Gnesins Russian Academy of Music, Russia JOINT FINAL REPORT (Russian and English)

Self evaluation report - Choral conducting degree programme, Gnesins Russian Academy of Music (Russian and English)

Self evaluation report of higher professional education educational programme - ECONOMICS, NON-STATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION OF HIGHER PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT TISBI (Russian and English)

Self evaluation report of educational programmes from State educational institution of higher education "Dagestan State University" (DSU):

- "Economy" (bachelor's degree);
- "State and Municipal Management" (bachelor's degree);
- "Management" (bachelor's degree);
- "Economics" (master);
- "State and Municipal Management" (master);
- "Management" (master).