

DOUGLAS BLACKSTOCK, PRESIDENT
SAAHE, BRATISLAVA, 21 NOVEMBER 2024

QUALITY ASSURANCE FIT FOR THE CHANGING WORLD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

enqa.

THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

ENQA IN BRIEF



Who we are

Membership association of QA agencies:
60 members - 32 countries
42 affiliates – 27 countries



What we do

Represent interests
Provide services to members and stakeholders
Drive development of external QA



How we do it

Policy input	Projects
Events	Publications
Working groups	Agency reviews

- A key goal of the ...(ESG)... is to contribute to the **common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching**
- The ESG are not standards for quality, **nor do they prescribe how the quality assurance processes are implemented...**
- The EHEA is characterised by its diversity of political systems, higher education systems, socio-cultural and educational traditions, languages, aspirations and expectations. This makes a **single monolithic approach to quality and quality assurance in higher education inappropriate.**

SOME THOUGHTS ON QUALITY

- **learning approach** – student centred, stretching, new concepts
- **learning environment** – teaching or study spaces, library, IT support
- **engagement** – desire to learn, inspiration from teachers & support staff
- **assessment** – recognising learning in a fair and transparent way
- **experience** – during application, admission, induction, time on campus, the social and well being aspects, growing as an individual
- **relevant** – programmes for life, work and society
- **inclusive**– being able to contribute to the academic community
- Any measurement of quality will always be a proxy - holistic view needed

QUALITY IS NOT BY ACCIDENT

Quality takes:

- Time
- Design
- Reflection
- Co-creation
- And is best advanced when institutions, students, and stakeholders collaborate in developing expectations and sharing of effective practice
- ESG has two pillars - assurance and enhancement. Assurance is necessary for trust and enhancement makes us better!

HOT TOPICS FOR QA

- Digital developments to support IQA and EQA practice
- Artificial intelligence in learning, teaching and assessment
- **A lot of activity** on micro-credentials
- ENQA and UNESCO shared concerns on transparency of QA of transnational education – Tirana communique calls for robust QA.
- Academic Integrity – essay mills, diploma mills, accreditation mills
- Cross Border choice of QA agency – can be very positive if done well.

THE DIGITAL ERA

Digitalisation, data and AI are transforming internal quality assurance and performance management of HEIs....

External QA cannot prevent this (nor should it)
but how do we respond to it?

HOW ARE UNIVERSITIES ADAPTING

- Learning, teaching and assessment
- Preparing students for careers
- Digital assessment - accelerated during pandemic
- Improving services for students
- Expediting programme development
- Data informed IQA and EQA - learner analytics and student record systems - real time data for quality improvement.

- Internal efficiencies in support departments

Issues

- *Academic integrity – real challenges*
- *In a period of trial, and undoubtedly error*
- *Issues of data integrity*
- *Authentic assessment*
- *Guidance for students*

HOW ARE QA AGENCIES ADAPTING FOR DIGITAL & AI?

- QAA UK, dedicated web resources to support HEIs and share practice
- ANQA, Armenia, using ChatGPT to analyse external review reports
- HKCAAVQ, Hong Kong, using automation and AI tools to get 30% reduction in administration tasks in accreditation
- NOKUT, Norway – digitalisation committee – processes smoother for HEIs, analyse submissions – understand how HEIs are using AI?
- ARACIS, Romania – mapped practice in 26 countries – shows improving efficiency of QA processes.
- NAQA AE, Egypt/ ANQA HE current survey on AI in QA agencies

WHAT ARE AGENCIES EXPERIENCING?

A few points picked up in recent events/sessions:

- Concerns over reliability of AI generated EQA reports or recommendations – how to test/prove that it comes to the same conclusions?
- How do we know a self evaluation is real? Should agencies use plagiarism detection software?
- Concerns over data privacy when using publicly available AI tools
- Insufficient resources (financial and human) to develop and use internal/agency specific tools (NVAO Flanders looked into custom building something, but the costs were prohibitive). Many agencies are small, and resource stretched. Heard stories of large budget cuts, e.g. AI Denmark and BAN-PT
- Risk of over-reliance on AI tools (what happens to ‘peer review’?).

SYSTEM LEVEL CHANGE : EU POLICY

- (QA of) European University Alliances
- ‘European degree’ (label) for joint degrees
- EU QA & recognition framework
- Faster movement on automatic recognition
- Focus on institutional level approval of self-accrediting institutions

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE TIRANA, ALBANIA 2024

ENQA's message to EHEA Ministers

- Ensure that national legislative frameworks allow quality assurance agencies to operate in compliance with the ESG
- Enable international collaboration by reducing national-level barriers in quality assurance and higher education while enhancing transparency
- Maintain the relevance and added value of external quality assurance by allowing quality assurance agencies to implement flexible and enhancement-oriented approaches
- [ENQA President speech for the 2024 EHEA Ministerial Conference](#) • [ENQA](#)

TIRANA COMMUNIQUE

To keep them in line with ongoing developments, challenges and expectations we **invite the authors of the ESG to propose a revised version** by 2026 to the BFUG, to be adopted by us at our 2027 Ministerial conference...

QA features in many other ways in the communique commitments

- *...the seamless mobility of students and staff...*
- *...supporting transnational cooperation...through better implementation of the key commitments....*
- *...and continuing to promote the use of quality assurance and transparency tools, such as DEQAR.*
- *continue to develop and strengthen dialogue and collaboration with macro regions.... This includes...alignment and mutual understanding of quality assurance principles.*
- *promote more robust and transparent quality assurance of transnational education delivered worldwide, in line with the ESG, to protect the interests of students*

FUTURE OF ESG – INFORMED BY QA FIT PROJECT



- Assess fitness for purpose in changing higher education environment
- Extensive consultation across full range of stakeholders
 - Consultation - surveys and focus groups with HEIs, ministries, QA agencies and students.
 - Further consultation with experts representing ENIC-NARICs, employers, teachers.
 - input from independent QA experts.
- Recommendations for future development of the ESG
- Steering committee & drafting group formed by E4 & partners

ESG 2027



- Evolution rather than revolution
- Maintain applicability in diverse contexts and explore areas of unclarity
- Ensure relevance in international contexts for IQA and EQA
- Situate learning and teaching in the broader context
- Future-proof: balance current issues with long term relevance

ISSUES FOR THE ESG REVISION



- What needs to be regulated and at what level?
- How can the ESG maintain its use as a guidance framework and criteria for compliance
- How to balance enhancement with accountability?
- Can the ESG be future-proofed?

All without moving the finishing line too far for developing systems! But also not being too afraid!!!
Or, losing focus on learning, teaching & assessment!

Key issues for QA agencies:

- Flexibility to address changes
- Room for innovation in EQA methodologies
- Added value of EQA in mature systems

TOPICS TO ADDRESS

- Introduction: Update and clarify context and key concepts; restructure and make main messages clearer
- Part 1: digitalisation (including online and blended provision), diversity of learners and academic staff, flexible learning pathways, links with other institutional missions, transversal topics (...)
- Part 2: flexibility in QA methodologies while maintaining sufficient accountability (...)
- Part 3: thematic analysis (...)

**Stay in
touch!**

**THANK
YOU**



Sign up to receive
our quarterly newsletter:
www.enqa.eu/contact/#newsletter

Follow ENQA on social media:



enqa.