

Annex I: Terms of Reference for a focused review of the Independent Kazakhstan Center of Accreditation (IKCA)

This document is to agree on the Terms of Reference (ToR) that address the request of the Independent Kazakhstan Center of Accreditation (IKCA), Kazakhstan, to undergo a focused review against the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The request follows EQAR Register Committee's decision to reject the application by IKCA (Ref. RC41/A130, 12 December 2023, annex I to this document).

Chapter 1: Background and request of IKCA for a focused review

IKCA approached ENQA to coordinate a focused review addressing those issues that led to the rejection of the agency's application for inclusion on the Register. EQAR's 'Procedures for Applications' (§3.21) allow the agency to undergo such a focused review, and to reapply within 18 months based on this review.

Subsequently, on 11 February 2024 IKCA officially approached ENQA to coordinate the abovementioned focused review and prepare a review report that will be considered for the purpose of EQAR-registration. On 16 February 2024, ENQA agreed to coordinate the focused review. The review follows ENQA methodology for partial reviews (see ENQA Rules of Procedure, article 7, and ENQA's policy on partial reviews of members under review) that is aligned with the requirements of a focused review for the purposes of EQAR-registration. In case of provisions not covered by ENQA's policy on partial reviews of members under review, the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews (for full reviews) are to be followed.

Chapter 2: Purpose and scope of the focused review

Chapter 2.1: Activities within the scope of the ESG

The focused review will address the above mentioned ESG standards through the following external QA activities of IKCA:

1. Institutional accreditation of higher education organizations (incl. post-accreditation monitoring)¹
2. Specialized (programmatic) accreditation of educational programs (incl. post-accreditation monitoring),²

The following activities are considered to be outside of the scope of the ESG as they do not cover provisions on EHEA QF level 6-8, unless the panel comes across new evidence that proves otherwise³:

3. Institutional and program accreditation of technical and vocational education and

¹ Including the Standards for Institutional Accreditation of Medical Educational Organisations and Standards for Institutional Accreditation of Pedagogical Educational Organisations. The specific standards follow the standard methodology for institutional accreditation, but add set of further criteria depending on the field of study (e.g. WFME criteria for the evaluations of the Medical Educational Organisations).

² Including the Standards for specialised (programme) accreditation of Medical Educational Organisations, Standards for specialised (programme) accreditation of Pedagogical Educational Organisations and Standards for accreditation of third cycle programmes (Doctoral studies). The specific standards follow the standard methodology for programme accreditation, but add set of further criteria depending on the field of study (e.g. WFME criteria) or the QF level of the programme.

³ Should this be the case, the coordinator is expected to inform EQAR at the earliest convenience and request an amendment of the terms of reference.

4. Accreditation of organizations of additional (further) education (incl. post-accreditation monitoring).

Should any substantive changes occur in IKCA between now and the review (e.g. organisational changes, the introduction or changes of activities within or outside of the scope of the ESG), the agency should inform EQAR at its earliest convenience.

The following standards were judged as partially or non-compliant by EQAR Register Committee (see EQAR Register Committee's decision not to include the agency on the Register, Ref. RC41/A130, 12 December 2023), and the following aspects are thus expected to be covered in the review:

- ESG 2.1 (Consideration of internal quality assurance) regarding whether the practical implementation of Part I is ensured and whether all standards of Part I are included in IKCA's reports;
- ESG 2.2 (Designing methodologies fit for purpose) regarding whether:
 - (a) IKCA adopted a clear approach to grouping the programmes in its clustered reviews and
 - (b) the involvement of stakeholders in developing and reviewing the methodologies is systemic and substantial;
- ESG 2.5 (Criteria for outcomes) regarding whether IKCA improved the consistency of its decision making, including the developing of thorough analysis and evidence in its reports, and ensured consistency in the use of pre - defined criteria and in the reaching of its judgements;
- ESG 3.3 (Independence) regarding whether:
 - (a) the agency ensures its independence from its founder,
 - (b) it distributes the power of governing of the agency in an equal manner among the stakeholders, and
 - (c) it clarified the selection processes of the agency's different bodies;
- ESG 3.4 (Thematic analysis) regarding whether the agency has developed a systematic approach to thematic analysis;
- ESG 3.6 (Internal quality assurance and professional conduct) regarding whether the agency utilises the feedback gathered through its internal quality assurance feedback mechanisms to improve its work.

The report should also confirm whether the other findings (in regard of those standards not covered in depth now) of the full review report of 19 April 2023 remain valid.

Chapter 2.2: Content and preparation of the review report

The agency is expected to produce a self-assessment report on the points raised above, indicating in particular changes that have taken place since the last full review. In addition, the agency will indicate any eventual changes and developments in the agency's activities beyond those listed under the criteria under scrutiny, and that might be relevant in view of the agency's ESG compliance. This requirement follows ENQA's policy on partial reviews of members under review, Content, p. 2, and EQAR's Procedures for Applications⁴.

⁴ <https://www.eqar.eu/about/official-documents/#procedures-for-applications>

The focused review foresees a site visit (in person) to the agency.

Following the site visit, a review report will be drafted in consultation with all review panel members and correspond to the purpose and scope of the review as defined above. In particular, the review report will concentrate on the same criteria as in a full review and assess how the compliance has evolved since this last review. Furthermore, it will provide a clear rationale for its findings concerning each ESG. When preparing the report, the review panel should bear in mind the EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG⁵ to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR. Finally, the report will also assess any eventual changes that have been brought to the attention of the panel in the self-assessment report.

Chapter 3: Panel composition

The ENQA Agency Review Committee will nominate three external reviewers to complete the task. The composition of the panel for the ECAQA full review in 2023 was as follows:

Heli Mattisen	Chair (ENQA nominee), quality assurance professional
Marie Gould	Secretary (ENQA nominee), quality assurance professional
Paolo Cherubini	Panel member (EUA nominee), academic
Stanimir Boyadzhiev	Panel member (ESU nominee, member of the European Students' Union Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool)

For the focused review, ENQA will use **one member** of the panel which carried out the last full review, to the extent possible, in order to ensure consistency, sufficient background knowledge on the agency, and the external trust in the outcomes (independent of the Agency Review Committee). The two other panel members will be selected so to complement the panel with altogether three viewpoints, that of a student, an academic and a quality assurance professional.

One of the panel members will be appointed as a Chair of the panel. The panel secretary will be appointed by the Chair, should the Chair not cover the secretary tasks.

The panel members will be asked whether they are willing and able to carry out the work within the timeline as listed in chapter 4 of the terms of reference.

Chapter 4: Timeline

	Deadline
Terms of Reference agreed with IKCA and EQAR	May 2024
Completion of focused review SAR by IKCA	31 May 2024
Appointment of focused review panel members and agreement on reviewer contracts	June 2024
Site visit to IKCA	October/November 2024
Delivery of draft report to ENQA Secretariat	January 2025
Draft report to IKCA for a factual check	February 2025
Completion of report and submission to ENQA	February 2025
Report validation by ENQA Agency Review Committee	March 2025

⁵ The Use and Interpretations of the ESG are available at the following link:
https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2020/09/RC_12_1_UseAndInterpretationOfTheESG_v3_0.pdf

EQAR Register Committee meeting and decision on the application	Spring/Summer 2025
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Chapter 5: Costs

ITEM	COST
Expert fee - Chair	€ 2 000
Expert fee - panel member	€ 1 500
Expert fee - panel member	€ 1 500
Coordination fee ENQA	€ 2 500
Site visit (estimate, full actual cost to be covered by the agency) ⁶	€ 4 000
TOTAL	€ 11 500

Chapter 6: Annexes

Annex 1: EQAR Register Committee's decision not to include the agency on the Register, Ref. RC41/A130, 12 December 2023

⁶ Calculation is based on four return flights to Kazakhstan (three experts and a review coordinator), and two nights in a hotel as proposed by the agency under review.