



# **ENQA Review Follow-Up Report**

by the Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education  
(IQAA)

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The ENQA Review of the Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA) took place in October 2016 in Astana. The review helped the Agency to upgrade its procedures and pay more attention to systemising its activities. In the External Review Report, the ENQA Review panel had provided commendations on the Agency's achievements and recommendations to further improve the Agency's standards. Some recommendations were instantly implemented by the Agency, while others took time to carry out.

***ESG 3.1: Amend its Statutes to explicitly assign the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of its strategy to a governing body, and put in place formal mechanisms for translating its strategic objectives into its daily activities and for measuring progress towards its strategic objectives.***

Based on the recommendation from the ENQA review panel, IQAA had made amendments in its Statutes, and established [the Supervisory Board](#). The Supervisory Board of IQAA is responsible for determining the Agency's main fields of activities, approving the Agency's Strategy of Development, long-term plans of activities and annual reports of the Agency's activities.

Based on the Regulations of the Supervisory Board of IQAA, it convenes twice a year. The Supervisory Board includes one international expert. [The first meeting of the Supervisory Board](#) took place on 22 September 2018. The Accreditation Council has retained its main duties, to examine self-assessment and peer review reports, and make decisions on the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes.

The Agency's strategy was revised, and the new Strategy of Development for 2019-2023 was adopted, which defines more precisely quantitative indicators to determine progress in the Agency's activities. On the basis of the Strategy of Development, annual plans of the Agency's activities and action plans for the Departments of the Agency are prepared.

***ESG 3.4: Analyse the material available in its accreditation review reports and produce on this basis (a) thematic analysis(es) to support further development of quality assurance in higher education institutions and policy development at national level.***

IQAA regularly publishes [thematic analyses](#) in different fields, including thematic analyses based on external review reports since 2016, which are intended for the improvement of quality assurance in higher education institutions and national policy development.

***ESG 3.5: Consider allocating some resources specifically for English language training of staff in the coming years.***

Since the level of English language proficiency was different among the staff members of the Agency, it was deemed that organising group lessons of English language would not be effective, and it was agreed that employees would work on improving their English language on an individual basis. Besides, many staff members do not require fluency in English to perform their daily duties. On the other hand, for example, the Analysis and Quality Department of IQAA is frequently tasked with analysing recent news in the world and studying best international practice in quality assurance of higher education. Therefore, staff members of the Analysis and Quality department are fluent in English.

***ESG 3.6: Put in place, as part of its internal quality assurance system, a formal mechanism for regular self-analysis and self-assessment and use of findings from the process for institutional enhancement.***

The Agency has instituted a formal mechanism for regular self-analysis and self-assessment, and the use of findings from the process for institutional enhancement on an annual basis. IQAA had organised meetings and involved external stakeholders for this purpose as well. This mechanism has helped to improve the effectiveness of the Agency's work and resulted in appropriate changes and adjustments in the Agency's standards and regulations. The system of internal quality assurance is based on the Mission and Aims of the Agency, and it is outlined in the IQAA Guidelines on Internal Quality Assurance.

***ESG 2.1: (1) Focus more strongly on the effectiveness of internal quality assurance in its accreditation methodology, while allowing for the varying progress made by institutions in the development of their internal quality assurance systems; (2) refine its accreditation standards concerning student-centred learning (corresponding to ESG 1.3) so that they give more consideration to how the concept is translated into pedagogical approaches and***

***assessment practices; and (3) give more consideration to the primary responsibility of institutions for quality in its interpretation of ESG 1.9.***

The Agency revised the standards of institutional accreditation to put more focus on effectiveness and transparency of internal quality assurance systems of higher education institutions (a. 1.3.1 (Standards of Institutional Accreditation)).

The Agency revised the criteria of the standards of institutional and programme accreditation on student-centred learning, for example, the Agency strengthened criteria for student-centred learning in the fields of teaching methods and forms, expected learning outcomes and their assessment (a. 3.4.3, a. 3.4.11 (Standards of Institutional Accreditation), a. 3.4.1, a. 3.4.6 (Standards of Programme Accreditation)).

The Agency has also put emphasis on conducting conferences and trainings to contribute to the development of student-centred learning in Kazakhstan. On 5 October 2017, the Agency organised the international conference "[Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Evaluation: Principles and Technologies](#)" for external experts and representatives of higher education institutions. In addition, the Agency had translated into Russian, published and distributed among higher education institutions of Kazakhstan the books " Student-Centred Learning Toolkit for Students, Staff and Higher Education Institutions" and "Student-Centred Learning: An Insight Into Theory and Practice".

On 6 October 2017, there was also organised the training "[Development of Study Programmes based on Competence, Student-Centered Learning and Quality Assurance](#)". The focus of the training was on student-centred learning algorithms in the development of study programmes in line with intended learning outcomes and the selection of effective monitoring tools.

The Agency upgraded questionnaires for external reviews, which now include questions on student-centered learning for students and academic staff of universities. These questionnaires are used by external experts in analysing the criteria on student-centred learning.

Several training webinars were organised for students participating in external assessments in recent years and a new version of the handbook for students was prepared. The upgraded version was supplemented with new useful information about accreditation process and guidelines for students on the participation in external reviews. In particular, the handbook describes components of student-centred learning and the ways of its implementation.

IQAA has outlined the effectiveness of internal quality assurance systems being the responsibility of higher education institutions within a post-accreditation monitoring process (a. 10.2.1 (Standards of Institutional Accreditation), a. 8.2.10 (Standards of Programme Accreditation)).

***ESG 2.2: In order to make its external quality assurance methodology better fit for purpose, (1) phase out its preliminary review process; and (2) redesign its post-accreditation monitoring process before the second cycle of accreditation reviews, so that it focuses on follow-up on action taken by institutions in response to findings from accreditation reviews (rather than on progress they make towards meeting its accreditation standards, with a view to facilitating reaccreditation); and to balance this, (3) expand its QA capacity building activities for institutions, in particular on IQA, so that they are better prepared to undergo an accreditation review and take primary responsibility for quality and its assurance; put in place a mechanism for regular review of its methodology, including arrangements for regular collection of feedback on its fitness for purpose from its external stakeholders.***

It was agreed that a preliminary review process for institutional accreditation was redundant and it was phased out by the Agency in 2016. It was introduced when an accreditation process had just started in Kazakhstan, and it was useful for accreditation of higher education institutions then.

Post-accreditation monitoring (PAM) was redesigned and analysis of educational institutions' activities was removed from it. The focus on the fulfilment of recommendations based on peer review reports was retained. Reports by higher education institutions are provided once a year to provide information on changes in them. Post-accreditation monitoring audits are carried out once after two years of accreditation in accordance with the Standard 10 of Institutional Accreditation and the Standard 8 of Programme Accreditation.

The Agency seeks to expand QA capacity in a number of ways, including by organising conferences and workshops for external experts and representatives of higher education institutions on a regular basis. Leading experts from Kazakhstan and the world are invited to present at these conferences. IQAA also translates and publishes books and brochures on QA topics from time to time.

For example, on April 6, 2018, the Agency organised the international conference ["Management of Internal Quality Assurance Systems in Higher Education"](#) with

the participation of Prof. Lucien Bollaert as a key speaker, one of leading international experts on internal quality assurance in higher education.

The Agency was granted the right from Prof. Lucien Bollaert and EURASHE to translate into Russian and publish a limited issue of the book of Prof. Lucien Bollaert "Manual for Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education – with a special focus on professional higher education" for the purpose of the conference, which was distributed among more than one hundred representatives of higher education institutions in Kazakhstan.

The Agency has upgraded mechanisms for regular self-analysis and collecting feedback from external stakeholders. Since 2015, the Agency sends surveys to gather external feedback from external experts who participate in peer reviews. Besides, the Agency now also sends letters to higher education institutions, which request proposals for changes in the standards of institutional and programme accreditation on an annual basis.

On 30 June 2017, [the meeting on the subject of proposed changes in the IQAA's standards and criteria of institutional and programme accreditation](#) was organised. The meeting was attended by more than 40 participants: rectors, vice-rectors and representatives of higher education institutions responsible for quality assurance as well as chiefs of IQAA's Accreditation Committees.

***ESG 2.3: For greater clarity, amend its regulations on programme accreditation so that they refer more explicitly to the compulsory status of post-accreditation monitoring and define more precisely its scope.***

IQAA amended the Standard 8 of Programme Accreditation (a. 8.2.10., a. 8.2.11), which outlines the compulsory status of post-accreditation monitoring for study programmes. The post-accreditation monitoring of study programmes is designed to implement recommendations based on external review reports of study programmes.

***ESG 2.4: Consider providing international experts with additional training and/or materials on the national higher education and quality assurance context.***

The information about higher education in Kazakhstan is available to international experts in the form of a presentation. The purpose of the presentation is to

provide brief information about the higher education system in Kazakhstan as well as about quality assurance of higher education in Kazakhstan, legislation and study process in higher education institutions of Kazakhstan. This information allows international experts to better understand higher education in Kazakhstan and participate more effectively in external reviews of higher education institutions and study programmes in Kazakhstan.

***ESG 2.5: (1) Amend its Provision on decision-making of the IQAA Accreditation Council concerning institutional accreditation to explicitly authorise the Council to adjust algorithmbased ratings in justified cases (as is currently the case for programme accreditation); and (2) revise its guidelines for experts so that they define more precisely minimum requirements to be fulfilled or acceptable shortcomings for each of the four levels of compliance with its accreditation standards.***

The Agency amended the Provision on Decision-Making of the IQAA Accreditation Council (Minutes of the the IQAA Accreditation Council Meeting № 7 from 9 December 2017), which states that the Accreditation Council has the right to adjust algorithm-based ratings in justified cases for institutional accreditation.

The detailed guidelines for external experts on determining the levels of compliance in peer reviews, which state requirements for all levels of compliance, are listed in the Digest of the Normative-Methodical Documents of the Agency (Astana, 2016).

***ESG 2.6: (1) Amend its regulations so that they state explicitly that accreditation review reports are published on its website regardless of the final outcome of a review; and (2) accordingly, publish all reports and related decisions of the Accreditation Council at least on its main website. IQAA may also consider the value of publishing summaries in English of all accreditation review reports, including those leading to conditional accreditation and non accreditation, on its English-language website.***

The Guidelines on the Organisation and Conduct of External Reviews for Institutional and Programme Accreditation were upgraded, and explicitly state that full reports of external reviews, regardless of the nature of decisions by the Accreditation Council, are published on the Agency's website.

All external review reports and decisions of the Accreditation Council are posted [on the Agency's website](#).

While it would be a worthwhile task to publish all summary peer review reports in English on the website, the Agency currently doesn't have enough resources to implement it. The Agency aims to publish more summary reports in English on the website in the future.

Besides reporting on the progress made on the recommendations by the ENQA Review panel, IQAA would like to inform the Progress Visit panel about new developments in its work.

IQAA organised the first Eurasian Forum on Quality Assurance in Higher Education "[Forward to the Future: Trends, Challenges and Prospects in Quality Assurance of Higher Education](#)", dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the Agency, on September 20-21, 2018. Representatives of higher education institutions and QA agencies from Central Asia, Caucasus and Europe participated in the conference. The Eurasian Forum on Quality Assurance in Higher Education is intended to bring together QA and higher education communities of the countries in the region together to share new ideas, exchange experiences and promote cooperation.

Since the ENQA Review in 2016, IQAA became a member of ENQA and was listed on EQAR. IQAA was reconfirmed in the National Register of Accreditation Agencies of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2017, after the first five year term of the National Register had expired. While IQAA achieved positive results during the years of its work, the Agency is still committed to further development and regular self-assessment of its standards.

## References

1. The Statutes of IQAA.
2. The Provision on the IQAA's Supervisory Board.
3. IQAA's Strategic Plan for 2019-2023.
4. The Guidelines on Internal Quality Assurance of IQAA.
5. IQAA's Standards and Criteria for Institutional Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions.
6. IQAA's Standards and Criteria for Programme Accreditation.
7. IQAA's Regulations on Post-Accreditation Monitoring.
8. "Student-Centred Learning Toolkit for Students, Staff and Higher Education Institutions". Angele Attard, Emma Di Iorio, Koen Geven, Robert Santa. Bucharest, 2010. Russian Version Translated and Published by IQAA.

- Astana, 2017.
9. "Student-Centred Learning: An Insight Into Theory and Practice". Angele Attard, Emma Di Iorio, Koen Geven, Robert Santa. Bucharest, 2010. Russian Version Translated and Published by IQAA. Astana, 2017.
  10. "Manual for Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education – with a special focus on professional higher education". Lucien Bollaert. EURASHE. Brussels, 2014. Limited Issue of the Russian Version Translated and Published by IQAA. Astana, 2018.
  11. The Provision on the Decision-Making of the IQAA Accreditation Council about Institutional Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions.
  12. The Provision on the Decision-Making of the IQAA Accreditation Council about Accreditation of Study Programmes.
  13. The Minutes of the IQAA Accreditation Council Meeting № 7 from 9 December 2017.
  14. The Digest of the Normative-Methodical Documents of IQAA. Astana, 2016.
  15. IQAA's Guidelines on the Organisation and Conduct of External Reviews for the Procedures of Institutional and Programme Accreditation.