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Director
Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria)
Renngasse 5
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Bern, 3 July 2019

Subject: Reconfirmation of membership of AQ Austria in ENQA

Dear Achim,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 20 June 2019, the Board of ENQA agreed to reconfirm the AQ Austria membership of ENQA for five years from that date. The Board concluded that the agency is in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and thus fulfils the membership criteria according to article 6, paragraph 1 of ENQA's rules of procedure.

The Board would like to use this opportunity to provide an articulation regarding standard 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct, where their judgement differs from that of the panel. The Board notes that there is sufficient evidence that the agency has processes in place for internal quality assurance regarding defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities. While the recommendations of the panel remain valid, the Board believes the panel was too strict in their judgement. Following this, in the opinion of the Board, the standard 3.6 is fully compliant.

The Board would like to receive a follow-up report containing AQ Austria's reactions to all recommendations within two years of its decision, i.e. by June 2021.

The Board also encourages AQ Austria to take advantage of the voluntary progress visit – an enhancement-led feature in the review process. The visit would take place in about two years' time from this decision. The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with you in about a year's time to discuss this possibility. The costs of this visit have already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable except for the travel costs of the experts. More information about the progress visit can be found in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Please accept my congratulations to AQ Austria for the positive review outcome and I look forward to continued fruitful cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Christoph Grolimund
President

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel, AQ Austria is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

3.4 Thematic analysis

AQ Austria is recommended to structurally embed the practice of the publication of thematic analyses in its work programme, providing overview reports which bring together the results of its quality assurance processes, demonstrating their relevance for major quality issues in higher education in order to raise awareness among the HE sector and to better inform society. Furthermore, the agency is recommended to develop further its thematic analyses by focusing on QA in a broader sense, such as in issues like internationalization, employability, active learning and pedagogical innovation. This could be done by using specialized software and tools devoted to content and qualitative analysis.

2.1 Consideration of internal QA

AQ Austria should address some of the standards that are not currently covered by some of the procedures, especially as regards audits and international programme accreditation. In particular, attention should be given to the coverage of standards 1.2 and 1.8 in some procedures, as it is recognized by the agency itself. Furthermore, AQ Austria is recommended to reflect critically about its understanding of some of those standards and the way these are effectively covered by the existing procedures. In particular, the coverage of standard 1.3 seems incomplete, especially in international accreditations.

2.3 Implementing processes

AQ Austria is recommended to take a more proactive role in the dissemination and implementation of follow up of the public universities.

2.5 Peer-review experts

AQ Austria is recommended to develop more explicit criteria in the case of audits, namely in what refers to the way the agency addresses ESG requirements more directly.