



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Prof João Guerreiro
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Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES)
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Brussels, 2 May 2024

Subject: Statement on validation of the external review report of A3ES

Dear Prof João Guerreiro,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting on 24 April 2024, the ENQA Agency Review Committee validated the external review report of A3ES. The committee concluded that the report has been produced in accordance with the Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews and can thus be used to apply for ENQA membership and EQAR registration, as well as for any other purposes. This is in line with article 26, paragraph 2 of ENQA's Rules of Procedure, which states that the review report can be further used only once this statement of validation has been issued. The purpose of the statement is to set out the committee's views on the quality of the final report and consistency of the panel's evaluation on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The committee examined the provided review report and asked the panel for minor revisions on the following standards: ESG 3.4, ESG 2.2, ESG 2.3 and ESG 2.4.

On ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis, the committee noted the panel's concern on the lack of strategic approach of the agency for the production of thematic analyses. However, in the committee's view, the listed recommendation does not refer to the requirements of the standard since the standard does not list the need for an agency to develop or publish a strategy on thematic analysis. The provided recommendation should thus be reformulated into a suggestion. Following this, since the agency was judged as partially compliant on this standard, the panel was asked to reconsider the judgement or sufficiently back up their decision with any other evidence.

Regarding ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose, the committee asked the panel to provide further information on the background to the provided suggestion in the analysis section, i.e., on the following suggestion: "The review panel suggests that A3ES continues to strengthen its relationship with the key stakeholders and explore the creation of structured mechanisms for open discussion on the evolution of its external quality assurance processes". Furthermore, differently from the outcome of the

agency's full review in 2019, the panel did not elaborate on the agency's design and fitness for purpose of its simplified EQA activities. Since this is a targeted review, the report should provide a further/follow-up reflection by the panel on this. Finally, regarding the new quality assurance activities, the review report should address standards ESG 2.1 to ESG 2.7 for the implementation of assessment procedures for distance learning (online) study programmes, to the extent possible.

On ESG 2.3 Implementing processes, the committee noted that the panel's description of the implementation of the site visits by A3ES is not clearly presented in the report (i.e., how consistent is the agency when implementing the site visit for all its activities and/or what are the objectives for not implementing a site visit for some of its activities). Furthermore, the follow-up is applied only in case of conditions to a HEI, which is not in line with the requirements of the standard. The panel should thus provide further information on this for all the EQA activities of A3ES (especially the consistency aspect of it within each activity).

Finally, regarding ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts, the committee noted that the training of experts is a prerequisite for building the expertise to the peer-review approach of EQA, thus the panel was asked to reconsider the suggestion and formulate it into a recommendation.

The committee received the final review report that addressed the additional requirements. The final review report can thus be further used to apply for ENQA membership and EQAR registration, as well as for any other purposes, as stipulated above.

This statement will be published on ENQA's website as an annex to the review report.

Thank you for your trust placed in ENQA to conduct this targeted review. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,



Mr. Alastair Delaney
Chair of ENQA Agency Review Committee

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel and further discussed by the committee (where relevant), A3ES is recommended to take appropriate action, in so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis

The agency is recommended to conduct and publish thematic analysis of the outcomes and findings of its external quality assurance activities.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

The agency is recommended to include student experts on EATs for all external quality assessment processes, specifically the implementation of its EQA processes in Macau and for the assessment of new study programmes (NCE and NCE EaD).

The agency is recommended to provide periodic and updated training, and training on new processes for all EAT members.

ESG 2.6 Reporting

The agency is recommended to publish all reports of its EQA processes, including the reports of a negative assessment decision.