

A red triangle pointing down and a green triangle pointing up are positioned at the top left of the slide.

The future of external QA: Perspectives from agencies



Start at 10.00

Speakers

- Elena Cîrlan, ENQA Senior Policy and Project Coordinator
- Mirella Nordblad, FINEEC (Finland) Counsellor of Evaluation
- Robert Redhammer, SAAHE (Slovakia) Chair of the Executive Board
- Douglas Blackstock, ENQA President

Chair

- Anna Gover, ENQA Director



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QA-FIT Findings

Drawn from survey data and discussions with QA agencies

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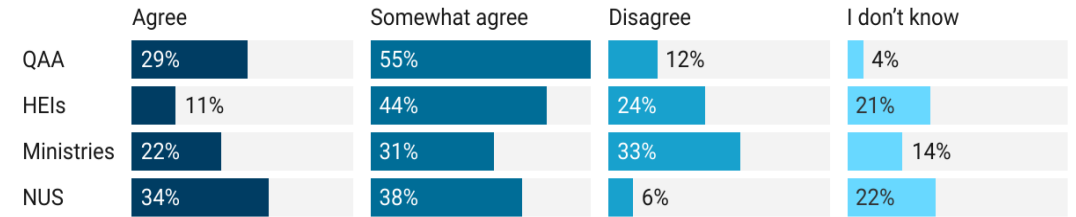
Elena Cîrlan
25 April 2025

Scope of the ESG

- the survey data were inconclusive as to which elements should be definitely covered in the revised ESG, as many topics are considered important
- majority of stakeholders in favour of including digitalisation, research, the third mission, academic freedom in the ESG
- QA agencies in favour of also adding academic integrity, sustainability, relationship with research, relation with strategic management, inclusion, diversity
- majority of stakeholders disagree that the ESG should focus on standards only
- the guidelines to the standards are needed; they may provide examples and ideas of good practice, give more reference, support enhancement and, potentially, innovation

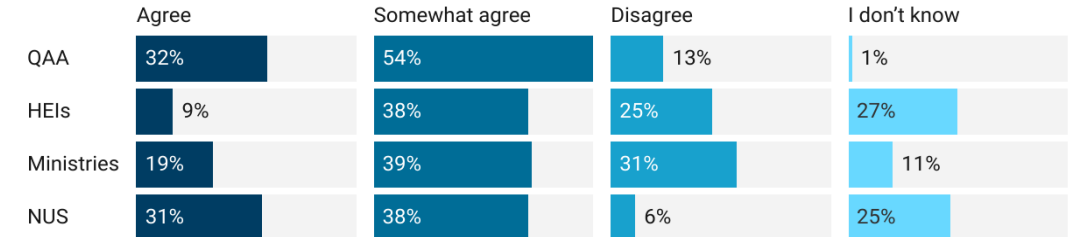
But: the views are not unanimous

The ESG Part 1 needs to be revised



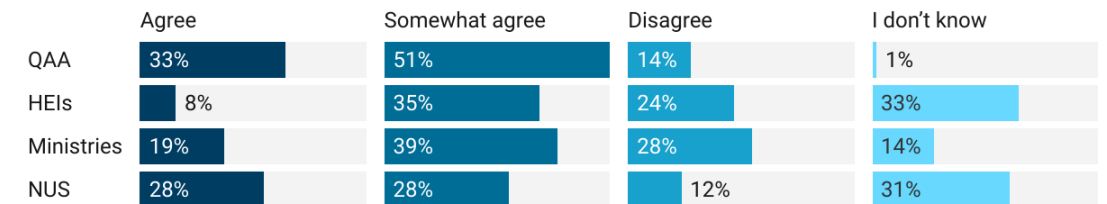
Source: QA-FIT survey • Created with Datawrapper

The ESG Part 2 needs to be revised



Source: QA-FIT survey • Created with Datawrapper

The ESG Part 3 needs to be revised



Source: QA-FIT Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Scope of the ESG

What needs changing?

- Update to reflect latest developments
- Stronger reference to cross-cutting issues and links between the missions of higher education
- Complementarity with other tools/frameworks
- Support for internationalisation

Should there be stronger reference to international activities?

Yes, but...

- It is already covered in ESG Introduction
- Could be more reference in guidelines, interpretation has to be flexible
- Could be an additional standard on internationalisation, but... might need to be optional as not relevant for all agencies/context
- Need to reflect current developments

(suggestions provided by agencies at workshop in October 2023)

Scope of the ESG

What could be removed from the ESG?

- Some Part 3 standards could become pre-requisites for evaluation?
 - 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance
 - 3.2 Official status
 - 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

Some standards could be merged

- 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes & 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance
- 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose & 2.3 Implementing processes
- 3.2 Official status & 3.3 Independence

Clarifications

- Clarify formulation and purpose of 2.7 Complaints & Appeals – to reflect the diversity of legal frameworks
- 3.4 Thematic analysis – remove or redefine it?

(suggestions provided by agencies at workshop in October 2023)

Scope of the ESG

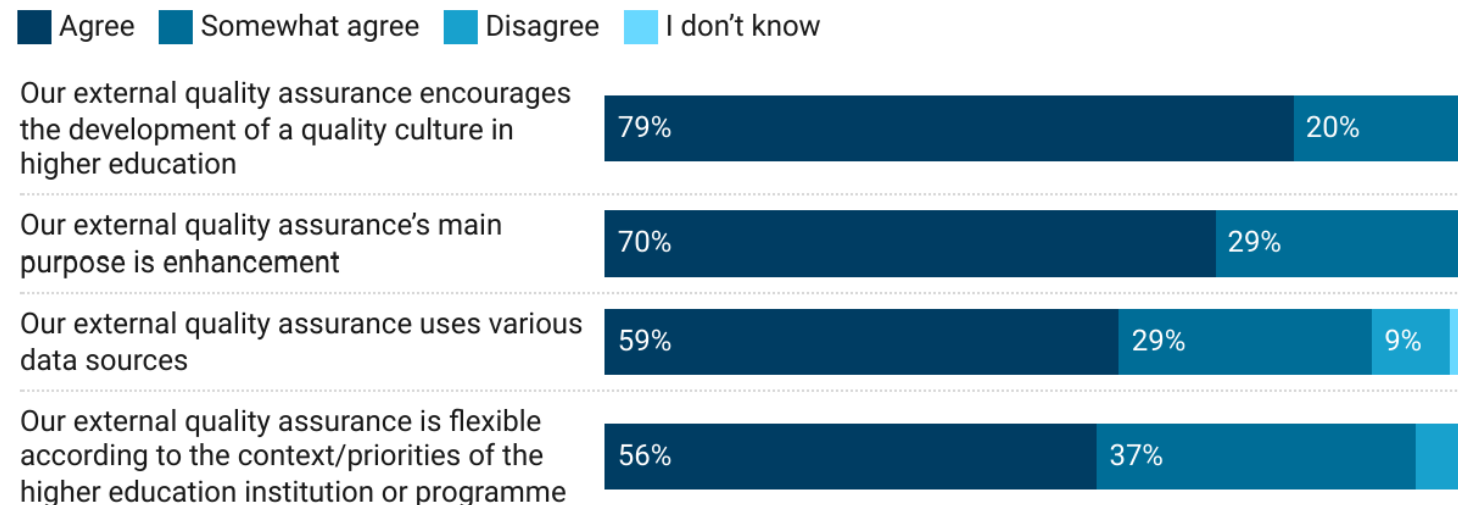
Further reflection about

- 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?

Flexibility of QA approaches

to maintain the relevance and impact of the external QA, agencies:

- update the QA framework/change criteria (after each evaluation cycle)
- consult stakeholders
- collaborate more with HEIs
- focus on improvement and enhancement
- employ various data sources
- develop various databases to facilitate the work
- use risk-based approaches and more flexible, simplified, targeted, tailor-made procedures
- give more ownership to HEIs



Flexibility of QA approaches

Should the traditional 4 steps (a self-assessment or equivalent; a site visit; a report resulting from the external assessment; a consistent follow-up) **of external QA methodology (ESG 2.3) be kept?**

Yes, but...

- The steps need to be used proportionally
- Not about the steps, but how they are used
- Agencies must justify the chosen approach (e.g. extent of site visit, nature of follow-up)
- Need to maintain sufficient accountability in low trust environments
- Standardisation vs flexibility – need to ensure that equity is granted, and no risk to consistency

Key issues for QA agencies:

- Flexibility to address changes
- Innovation in EQA methodologies
- Added value of EQA in mature systems

(suggestions provided by agencies at workshop in October 2023)