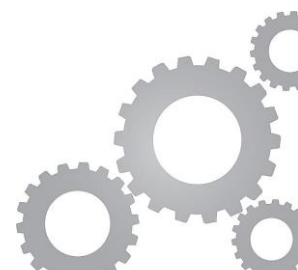


# Methodology for the External Review of ENQA's agency reviews



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# 1. Background & context

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) is a membership association of QA agencies in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). ENQA was first established in 2000 as the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education to promote European cooperation in the field of quality assurance in higher education. In November 2004, it became the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education with the aim to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of European higher education, and to act as a major driving force for the development of quality assurance across all the Bologna Process signatory countries. ENQA's mission is to represent the interests of the membership internationally, support them nationally and provide them with comprehensive services and networking opportunities. Under ENQA's umbrella, the community of agencies drive innovation in quality assurance and refine quality assurance processes.

The membership criteria of ENQA is compliance with Parts 2 and 3 of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG). The ESG were originally developed by the E4 (ENQA, EUA, EURASHE, ESU) and adopted during the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Bergen in 2005. The ESG were revised based on extensive consultations and recommendations before being adopted in Yerevan in 2015. Following the establishment of the ESG, the E4 were also founding members for the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), a public registry of agencies that comply with the ESG.

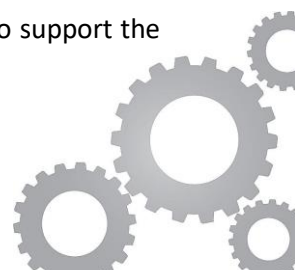
One of the core services offered by ENQA is external reviews of quality assurance agencies. An external review against the ESG is a prerequisite for an applicant agency to apply for or renew its membership of ENQA. It is also a requirement for agencies wishing to apply for registration in EQAR. Since 2011, most reviews of agencies wishing to apply for or renew their membership in ENQA and/or listing in EQAR are coordinated by ENQA.

ENQA manages all aspects of the review process. The ENQA Secretariat coordinates the reviews, manages the database of experts, organises trainings for the experts participating in reviews, coordinates the site visits to the agencies and oversees the preparation of the review report.

# 2. Purpose & Scope of the external review

External reviews of ENQA's agency review process are considered to be part of its own quality assurance cycle. These external reviews adhere to the principle outlined in ESG 3.7, which states that "agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG." This implies that ENQA must demonstrate compliance with the same requirements set for its member agencies. Therefore, ENQA will undergo a new external review against the ESG in 2024, following a previous review in 2019.

The overall focus of this external evaluation, coordinated by the Knowledge Innovation Centre (KIC), is to evaluate the various activities and procedures of the ENQA Agency Reviews with the intention to support the



improvement of its usefulness and fitness-for-purpose. It is important to note that the evaluation will only assess how the agency review process is carried out and will not extend to other activities carried out by ENQA.

The particular questions this external review addresses are to:

1. Assess how the principles outlined in the standards of ESG Parts 2 and 3 for quality assurance agencies reflected in ENQA's methodologies and practices for the full, partial and targeted reviews of agencies undertaken by ENQA (while adapting them to the context and work of ENQA).
2. Examine how the ENQA Agency Reviews contribute to the improvement of quality assurance agencies and allow for innovative approaches to quality assurance processes.

***In addition, the external review will reflect on the following topics:***

- The new activities and practices ENQA has introduced since the last review (e.g., the new compliance scale, ENQA Agency Review Committee, targeted review methodology);
- ENQA's collaboration with EQAR, including the existing challenges and opportunities for further enhancement of joint work on the agency reviews;
- How ENQA Agency Reviews connect with and contribute to the association's key strategic goals 2021-2025 and its overall aims and objectives.

## 3. The review process

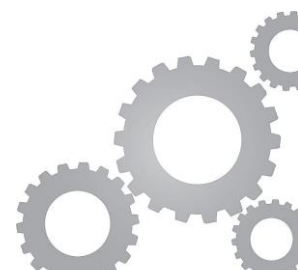
### 3.1 Evaluation approach

The external review process will broadly follow ENQA's own agency review processes, with some additions, and can be summarised in a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) four phases' approach:

**The PLAN phase:**

- A kick-off meeting between KIC and ENQA;
- Establishing the terms of reference of the review as outlined in this document and including the scope of the external review, detailed review methodology, timeline, review panel composition, identification of sources of information and planning of the site visit;
- Nomination, appointment and preparation of the expert panel;
- Creation of a self-assessment report (SAR) by ENQA, based on an agreed template.

**The DO phase:**



The review panel will collect evidence through:

- Analysis of ENQA's self-assessment report (SAR);
- Consultation of documented information available on ENQA's website, including annual reports of ENQA; a sample of recent full, partial and targeted agency review reports; ENQA's Thematic Analyses reports;
- A site visit to ENQA during which the review panel will interview internal and external stakeholders to enable triangulation of the information.

#### **The CHECK phase:**

The review panel will:

- Analyse the evidence collected through triangulation across its sources and verify the sufficiency of the evidence to cover the full scope of all the Standards and associated Guidelines of Part 2 and 3 of the ESG and to produce reliable findings and valid conclusions on the level of compliance of the individual Standards;
- Reflect on how the ENQA Agency Reviews contribute to the improvement of quality assurance agencies and allow for innovative approaches to quality assurance processes; ENQA's collaboration with EQAR; and the connection and contribution of ENQA Agency Reviews with the association's key strategic goals 2021-2025.

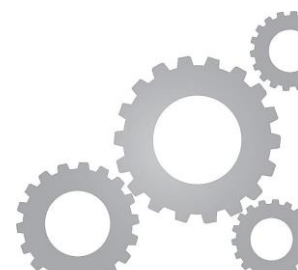
#### **The ACT phase:**

- The review panel will prepare and complete an external review report in which the evaluation findings will be categorised as good practices/commendations, level of compliance of the individual Standards and recommendations for improvement. In addition, the final report will contain the review panel's reflection on the new activities and practices introduced since the last review; on how the ENQA agency reviews contribute to the improvement of quality assurance agencies and allow for innovative approaches to quality assurance processes; ENQA's collaboration with EQAR; and the connection and contribution of ENQA Agency Reviews with the association's key strategic goals 2021-2025;
- ENQA will have an opportunity to correct factual errors in the draft report before the final version of the review report will be submitted for publication.

## **3.2 Review panel**

### **3.2.1 Composition of the Panel**

The review panel will consist of five members of whom one will function as the panel chair. As a whole, the panel will include:



- External quality assurance expertise, including managing QA reviews;
- Academic higher education expertise, in particular in relation to QA;
- Student expertise;
- European Higher Education policy expertise;
- Expertise on QA outside Europe.

The ENQA agency reviews operate in a highly complex setting of diverse European higher education systems. Consequently, it is essential that all panel members are highly experienced to provide a thorough and meaningful evaluation. They should thus have:

- A minimum of 5 years (except student expert) of experience in quality assurance of higher education, ideally with some leadership or management responsibilities;
- Active international experience, e.g. as agency reviewer, by previous engagement in ENQA or other international associations/networks, by being involved in reviews internationally.

The panel composition also needs to take into account appropriate gender and geographical balance, ideally including members with non-European QA expertise as well.

To avoid potential conflicts of interest, we will exclude individuals who currently hold any official function within ENQA (board members, agency review panel members, other committees, staff members), or held any during the past 5 years. In addition, we will not consider any individuals who currently hold an official function within EQAR. Current members of staff of ENQA member agencies that have undergone an agency review in the last two years or are scheduled for one in the next year are also deemed ineligible. Representatives of E4 organisations cannot act as review panel members but can be consulted for suggestions of relevant members.

As coordinator of the review, KIC will be responsible for selecting and proposing the review panel, whereas the ENQA Review Steering Committee will be responsible for its final approval. The Coordinator will take the following steps in this process:

- Propose a long-list of potential experts to ENQA;
- Examine potential conflicts of interest of the suggested experts;
- Submit a proposal for the review panel to the ENQA Review Steering Committee;
- Upon approval contract members of the Review Panel.

**The Review Panel will have the following roles and responsibilities:**

- Sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the ENQA external review, covering at least the cases of interest defined in the ENQA Code of Conduct for Reviewers;



- Take part in briefing and training sessions organised by the Coordinator on the main elements of the evaluation (scope, purpose, principles, methodology);
- Validate and if needed amend the list of interviewees (internal and external stakeholders) to be involved in the evaluation process;
- Approve and if appropriate add to the process of evidence collection;
- Analyse ENQA documents (self-evaluation report, strategic goals 2021-2025, sample review reports, other relevant documents), identify indicators, formulate relevant questions;
- Carry out the site visit of ENQA and undertake interviews with relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- Collect all gathered evidences , write the draft report and then produce the final version. The review panel will have full authority over the content, conclusions and recommendations in the final report.

### 3.2.2 Preparation and Training of the Panel

In terms of preparation and training of the Review Panel, we will start from the requirement that members that will be appointed to the panel have prior experience in undertaking QA reviews, either on the level of HEIs and/or QA agencies, and a good understanding of the ESG. We therefore have a reasonable assumption that all reviewers will have received some form of prior training for agency reviewers or relevant alternative experience. The additional preparation and training we will provide will focus specifically on the following areas:

1. Understanding of ESG Part 2 and 3: Training prioritises understanding of the ESG in the context of this evaluation, ensuring reviewers share a clear view how the Standards of Part 2 and 3 should be understood and applied in this context .
2. European QA Context and Recommendations: Training includes contextualising QA within the European framework, relevant current and recent policy developments, and guidance on making useful recommendations. This will also include an overview of recent changes to the ENQA agency reviews, such as the introduction of the Agency Review Committee and the roll-out of targeted reviews.
3. Skills and Expertise Mapping: We will map each member's skills to specific elements of the ESG and provide targeted training where expertise is lacking.

Preparation and training will be undertaken in an online format, with the panel as a whole as well as with individual panel members where appropriate. The training will be led by the KIC's QA experts, where external experts will be involved where appropriate.

### 3.2.3 Preparation of a self-assessment report by ENQA

ENQA will be responsible to develop its own self-assessment report (SAR). ENQA will hereby follow the same guidelines as it uses for its own review processes as outlined in its Guidelines for ENQA agency reviews. This



entails that the ENQA will develop the self-assessment with the involvement of relevant stakeholders and follow a structured template, including the following elements:

- A description of the self-assessment process and the production of the SAR;
- A description of the history and profile of ENQA;
- A list of review activities undertaken by ENQA;
- A description of ENQA's agency review process and its management;
- Sections that address each of the ESG Part 2 and Part 3 separately;
- Main findings and recommendations of the previous external review and actions taken on the basis of the recommendations;
- A SWOT analysis;
- Key challenges and areas for further development.

The structure and further planning of the self-assessment are further discussed between the Coordinator and ENQA during the kick-off meeting. Once the self-assessment report is submitted, the Coordinator will check if all elements in the agreed list are included before sending it to the review panel. If necessary, the Coordinator will ask ENQA for additional information and/or revision of the report.

### 3.3 Review criteria – ESGs adjusted to the ENQA context

The external review methodology will closely align with the methodology developed and implemented by ENQA for its review of QA agencies. This will involve a systematic examination of each Standard outlined in ESG Part 2 and Part 3. We will adapt the application of these Standards to suit the specific context of ENQA's agency reviews, rather than the original focus of the ESG on institutions and study programmes. The Coordinator proposes clarifications for each standard which are outlined in annex II of this document.

For each Standard, the review panel will seek evidence from various sources to evaluate how ENQA addresses the Standard in its reviews. Information sources the Panel will analyse include ENQA's self-evaluation report, interviews undertaken during the site visit, and supplementary materials such as a sample of ENQA's external review reports, Thematic Analyses reports and written feedback from QA agencies that ENQA collects as part of its regular processes. The panel will analyse this evidence in relation to the individual components of each Standard and their associated Guidelines.

Subsequently, the panel reaches a conclusion regarding ENQA's compliance with the Standard, employing the same evaluation scale utilised by ENQA: compliant, partially compliant, or non-compliant. Furthermore, the panel formulates recommendations and suggestions for improvements based on its findings.





The review panel will also use the information collected during the review process to address the additional questions outlined for this review, namely:

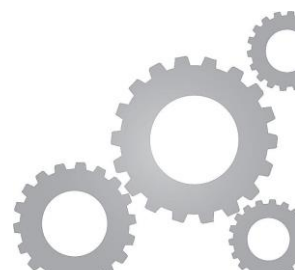
1. How the ENQA Agency Reviews contribute to the improvement of quality assurance agencies and allow for innovative approaches to quality assurance processes;
2. ENQA's collaboration with EQAR, including the existing challenges and opportunities for further enhancement of joint work on the agency reviews;
3. How ENQA Agency Reviews connect with and contribute to the association's key strategic goals 2021-2025 and its overall aims and objectives.

An appropriate and effective evaluation should ideally not be conducted in isolation from previous assessments. Therefore, this evaluation will firmly consider the findings of the previous external evaluation of ENQA's agency reviews, conducted in 2019. This will include an analysis of the extent to which improvements are apparent, in particular in response to recommendations made by the previous external review panel and whether the commitments and planned actions outlined in ENQA's response to those recommendations have been implemented and whether they have brought the desired results. The review panel will in particular reflect upon the new activities and practices introduced since the last review (e.g., the new compliance scale, ENQA Agency Review Committee, targeted review methodology).

## 3.4 Site visit

The Coordinator and ENQA will share the responsibility for the design of the schedule of the site visit to ENQA's office in Brussels (planned to last at least 2,5-days, excluding travel time). ENQA will have a good overview of the internal and external stakeholders that are relevant to be interviewed by the review panel and could provide an initial list of groups and individuals to be interviewed, including:

- Staff of ENQA (reviews managers) who have experience with being a coordinator of an agency review;
- Leadership at ENQA (director, deputy director) on how they manage the process internally;
- ENQA board members regarding the overall decision-making procedure and members of the Agency Review Committee;
- Members of ENQA's Appeals and Complaints Committee;
- A sample of members of ENQA review panels;
- Relevant stakeholders, including E4 and EQAR;
- A sample of QA agencies who have been through an agency review process recently.



The draft proposal of a schedule will be submitted to the review panel at least six weeks before the site visit. Prior to the site visit, the panel will have an internal online meeting during which expectations for the site visit, as well as any initial impressions from the SAR will be clarified. In addition, questions regarding additional documentation by ENQA will be clarified. If deemed necessary, the Panel will indicate if the list needs to be amended before confirming it.

Based on the agreed list of interviewees, the Panel and ENQA will agree on an interview schedule for the site visit. Interviews with key stakeholders who are not based in Brussels will be scheduled online. Based on the number of questions, a time slot of between 30 and 60 minutes will be suggested for each interview.

ENQA will be responsible for contacting and coordinating with interviewees, and ensuring their availability for the site visit. The purpose and format of interviews will be sent to involved interviewees two weeks before the site visits, allowing them to prepare, if necessary.

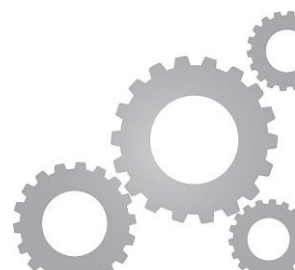
The site visit will conclude with a debriefing at ENQA, during which the Panel will share its overall impressions, but will not discuss any assessment of the findings.

## 3.5 Drafting of the External Review Report

The initial draft of the external review report will be prepared by the review panel. It will consist of a 3-5 page executive summary, a 40-50 page main report, and annexes as deemed necessary, according to the following structure:

<p><b>Main Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Executive Summary</li><li>• Review Methodology</li><li>• ENQA's history, profile, and review activities</li><li>• Review per ESG (evidence, analysis, level of compliance, recommendations)</li><li>• Contribution of ENQA reviews to improvements of QA agencies and innovative approaches</li><li>• ENQA's collaboration with EQAR: challenges &amp; opportunities</li><li>• Future outlook for ENQA reviews</li></ul> <p><b>Annexes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Terms of Reference</li><li>• Site visit schedule</li><li>• Bio's review panel members</li></ul>
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The drafting process will focus on both objectives of the external review. It will first assess:



*How the principles outlined in the standards of ESG Parts 2 and 3 for quality assurance agencies reflected in ENQA's methodologies and practices for the full, partial and targeted reviews of agencies undertaken by ENQA (while adapting them to the context and work of ENQA).*

The report will provide evidence and analysis regarding ENQA's compliance with the Standards outlined in Parts 2 and 3 of the ESG. It will include commendations and recommendations for improvement. Additionally, the report will feature a comparative analysis with the previous review report from 2019, identifying areas of improvement and progress over time.

Furthermore, the report will address the second objective of this external review, namely:

*Examine how the ENQA Agency Reviews contribute to the improvement of quality assurance agencies and allow for innovative approaches to quality assurance processes.*

ENQA plays a crucial role in maintaining and improving the standards of quality assurance agencies across Europe. Examining how ENQA's agency reviews contribute to the improvement of these agencies and foster innovative approaches involves understanding the impact of:

- **Areas for Improvement:** ENQA's agency reviews provide a detailed evaluation of the agencies' processes and practices, identifying areas for improvement. ENQA's feedback aims to encourage agencies to address any identified gaps and strengthen their processes. The analysis will consider whether and when such follow-up occur;
- **Best Practices:** ENQA agency reviews also include benchmarking against best practices in quality assurance. Agencies can learn from the successful strategies, adapting and adopting new methods and processes. The analysis will take into account whether and when such follow up happens.

Finally, the report will reflect on:

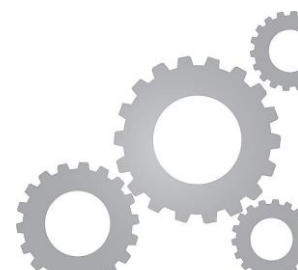
- ENQA's collaboration with EQAR, including the existing challenges and opportunities for further enhancement of joint work on the agency reviews;
- How ENQA Agency Reviews connect with and contribute to the association's key strategic goals 2021-2025 and its overall aims and objectives.

### **3.5.1 Final Evaluation Report**

ENQA will be requested to mark-up the draft report and indicate areas where there are mistakes, incompleteness or factual inconsistencies from the perspective of ENQA. Each comment received will be tracked and will be responded to by incorporating or rejecting the comment with reasoning.

At this stage, the Coordinator will do a final edit of the report for readability, as well as grammar layout and formatting. Our team will liaise with ENQA to receive the template and professional font to be used in the reports.

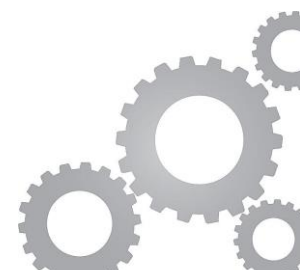
The final report will be delivered in an editable format as well as PDF, together with a statement of the evaluators that the report represents their independent opinion. The final version of the report will be publicly available, to make the process transparent and assure legitimacy of the process.



## 4 Timeline

The table below summarises the overall scope of the assignment, and the estimated workload of each step.

Completed activity	Deadline	Responsible
Terms of Reference agreed	March 2024	Coordinator & ENQA
Proposal review methodology & review panel submitted	April 2024	Coordinator
Review panel members contracted	June 2024	Coordinator
Self-assessment report submitted	16 September 2024	ENQA
Preparation & training review panel	September – October 2024	Coordinator
Site visit to ENQA in Brussels	w/c 9 December 2024	Review Panel
Draft report prepared	21 February 2025	Review panel & Coordinator
Comments on factual accuracy	14 March 2025	ENQA
Final evaluation report	28 March 2025	Review panel & Coordinator



## **Annex I – proposed panel members**

## **Annex II – Adjusted ESGs Part 2 & 3**



# Annex - ESG in the context of ENQA

## ESG Part 3: Standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies

### 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

<b>Standard</b>	Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<p><i>To ensure the meaningfulness of external quality assurance, it is important that institutions and the public trust agencies.</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, the goals and objectives of the quality assurance activities are described and published along with the nature of interaction between the agencies and relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the scope of the agencies' work. The expertise in the agency may be increased by including international members in agency committees.</i></p> <p><i>A variety of external quality assurance activities are carried out by agencies to achieve different objectives. Among them are evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities at programme or institutional level that may be carried out differently. When the agencies also carry out other activities, a clear distinction between external quality assurance and their other fields of work is needed.</i></p>
<b>ENQA context</b>	ENQA should engage in agency reviews on a regular basis. Agency review processes should be part of ENQA's activities and expressed in its publicly available mission statement. ENQA should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in its governance and work in relation to agency reviews.

### 3.2 Official status

<b>Standard</b>	Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.
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<b>Guidelines</b>	<i>In particular when external quality assurance is carried out for regulatory purposes, institutions need to have the security that the outcomes of this process are accepted within their higher education system, by the state, the stakeholders and the public.</i>
<b>ENQA context</b>	ENQA should have an established legal basis and its status as a body responsible for coordinating agency review processes should be widely recognised by the relevant EHEA stakeholders.

### 3.3 Independence

<b>Standard</b>	Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<p><i>Autonomous institutions need independent agencies as counterparts.</i></p> <p><i>In considering the independence of an agency the following are important:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Organisational independence, demonstrated by official documentation (e.g. instruments of government, legislative acts or statutes of the organisation) that stipulates the independence of the agency's work from third parties, such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholder organisations;</i></li> <li>- <i>Operational independence: the definition and operation of the agency's procedures and methods as well as the nomination and appointment of external experts are undertaken independently from third parties such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholders;</i></li> <li>- <i>Independence of formal outcomes: while experts from relevant stakeholder backgrounds, particularly students, take part in quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Anyone contributing to external quality assurance activities of an agency (e.g. as expert) is informed that while they may be nominated by a third party, they are acting in a personal capacity and not representing their constituent organisations when working for the agency. Independence is important to ensure that any procedures and decisions are solely based on expertise.</i></p>
<b>ENQA context</b>	ENQA should be independent and agency review processes need to be carried out autonomously. ENQA should have full responsibility for its agency review processes and their outcomes without third party influence.



### 3.4 Thematic analysis

<b>Standard</b>	Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<i>In the course of their work, agencies gain information on programmes and institutions that can be useful beyond the scope of a single process, providing material for structured analyses across the higher education system. These findings can contribute to the reflection on and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in institutional, national and international contexts.</i>  <i>A thorough and careful analysis of this information will show developments, trends and areas of good practice or persistent difficulty.</i>
<b>ENQA context</b>	ENQA should regularly publish reports that communicate general findings of the agency review processes.

### 3.5 Resources

<b>Standard</b>	Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<i>It is in the public interest that agencies are adequately and appropriately funded, given higher education's important impact on the development of societies and individuals. The resources of the agencies enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance activities in an effective and efficient manner. Furthermore, the resources enable the agencies to improve, to reflect on their practice and to inform the public about their activities.</i>
<b>ENQA context</b>	ENQA should have adequate and appropriate human and financial resources to carry out the review processes.

### 3.6 Internal Quality Assurance and Professional Conduct

<b>Standard</b>	Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<i>Agencies need to be accountable to their stakeholders. Therefore, high professional standards and integrity in the agency's work are indispensable. The review and improvement of their activities are on-going so as to ensure that their services to institutions and society are optimal.</i>





	<p><i>Agencies apply an internal quality assurance policy which is available on its website. This policy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>ensures that all persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically;</i></li> <li>- <i>includes internal and external feedback mechanisms that lead to a continuous improvement within the agency;</i></li> <li>- <i>guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination;</i></li> <li>- <i>outlines the appropriate communication with the relevant authorities of those jurisdictions where they operate;</i></li> <li>- <i>ensures that any activities carried out and material produced by subcontractors are in line with the ESG, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance activities are subcontracted to other parties;</i></li> <li>- <i>allows the agency to establish the status and recognition of the institutions with which it conducts external quality assurance.</i></li> </ul>
<b>ENQA context</b>	ENQA should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of its agency reviews.

### 3.7 Cyclical External Review of Agencies

<b>Standard</b>	Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<i>A periodic external review will help the agency to reflect on its policies and activities. It provides a means for assuring the agency and its stakeholders that it continues to adhere to the principles enshrined in the ESG.</i>
<b>ENQA context</b>	ENQA agency review processes should be evaluated on a regular basis in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG, taking into account ENQA's role as a reviewer of agencies rather than higher education institutions.



## ESG Part 2: Standards and guidelines for external quality assurance

### 2.1 Consideration of Internal Quality Assurance

<b>Standard</b>	External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<i>Quality assurance in higher education is based on the institutions' responsibility for the quality of their programmes and other provision; therefore it is important that external quality assurance recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance. To ensure the link between internal and external quality assurance, external quality assurance includes consideration of the standards of Part 1. These may be addressed differently, depending on the type of external quality assurance.</i>
<b>ENQA context</b>	ENQA agency reviews should verify whether agencies comply with Part 2 of the ESG and whether they effectively address the standards of ESG Part 1 in their external QA activities.

### 2.2 Designing Methodologies fit for purpose

<b>Standard</b>	External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<p><i>In order to ensure effectiveness and objectivity it is vital for external quality assurance to have clear aims agreed by stakeholders. The aims, objectives and implementation of the processes will</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>bear in mind the level of workload and cost that they will place on institutions;</i></li> <li>- <i>take into account the need to support institutions to improve quality;</i></li> <li>- <i>allow institutions to demonstrate this improvement;</i></li> <li>- <i>result in clear information on the outcomes and the follow-up.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>The system for external quality assurance might operate in a more flexible way if institutions are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance.</i></p>



<b>ENQA context</b>	ENQA agency reviews should be defined and designed in a manner that are fit for purpose. Stakeholders should be involved in the design and continuous improvement of these methodologies.
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## 2.3 Implementing processes

<b>Standard</b>	<p>External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a self-assessment or equivalent;</li> <li>- an external assessment normally including a site visit;</li> <li>- a report resulting from the external assessment;</li> <li>- a consistent follow-up.</li> </ul>
<b>Guidelines</b>	<p><i>External quality assurance carried out professionally, consistently and transparently ensures its acceptance and impact.</i></p> <p><i>Depending on the design of the external quality assurance system, the institution provides the basis for the external quality assurance through a self-assessment or by collecting other material including supporting evidence. The written documentation is normally complemented by interviews with stakeholders during a site visit. The findings of the assessment are summarised in a report (cf. Standard 2.5) written by a group of external experts (cf. Standard 2.4).</i></p> <p><i>External quality assurance does not end with the report by the experts. The report provides clear guidance for institutional action. Agencies have a consistent follow-up process for considering the action taken by the institution. The nature of the follow-up will depend on the design of the external quality assurance.</i></p>
<b>ENQA context</b>	<p>The ENQA Agency Reviews process should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. The process should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a self-assessment or equivalent;</li> <li>- an external assessment normally including a site visit;</li> <li>- a report resulting from the external assessment;</li> <li>- a consistent follow-up.</li> </ul>

## 2.4 Peer Review Experts



<b>Standard</b>	External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).
<b>Guidelines</b>	<p><i>At the core of external quality assurance is the wide range of expertise provided by peer experts, who contribute to the work of the agency through input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students and employers/professional practitioners.</i></p> <p><i>In order to ensure the value and consistency of the work of the experts, they</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>- are carefully selected;</i></li> <li><i>- have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task;</i></li> <li><i>- are supported by appropriate training and/or briefing.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>The agency ensures the independence of the experts by implementing a mechanism of no-conflict-of-interest.</i></p> <p><i>The involvement of international experts in external quality assurance, for example as members of peer panels, is desirable as it adds a further dimension to the development and implementation of processes.</i></p>
<b>ENQA context</b>	ENQA Agency Reviews should be carried out by groups of external experts, including (a) student member(s), whose composition ensures various perspectives from relevant stakeholders.

## 2.5 Criteria for Outcomes

<b>Standard</b>	Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<p><i>External quality assurance and in particular its outcomes have a significant impact on institutions and programmes that are evaluated and judged.</i></p> <p><i>In the interests of equity and reliability, outcomes of external quality assurance are based on pre-defined and published criteria, which are interpreted consistently and are evidence-based. Depending on the external quality assurance system, outcomes may take different forms, for example, recommendations, judgements or formal decisions.</i></p>
<b>ENQA context</b>	Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of ENQA agency reviews should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently.



## 2.6 Reporting

<b>Standard</b>	Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<p><i>The report by the experts is the basis for the institution's follow-up action of the external evaluation and it provides information to society regarding the activities of an institution. In order for the report to be used as the basis for action to be taken, it needs to be clear and concise in its structure and language and to cover</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- context description (to help locate the higher education institution in its specific context);</li> <li>- description of the individual procedure, including experts involved;</li> <li>- evidence, analysis and findings;</li> <li>- conclusions;</li> <li>- features of good practice, demonstrated by the institution;</li> <li>- recommendations for follow-up action.</li> </ul> <p><i>The preparation of a summary report may be useful.</i></p> <p><i>The factual accuracy of a report is improved if the institution is given the opportunity to point out errors of fact before the report is finalised.</i></p>
<b>ENQA context</b>	Full ENQA agency review reports should be published, clear and accessible for all interested parties, and the decision on compliance with the ESG should be published together with the reports.

## 2.7 Complaints and appeals

<b>Standard</b>	Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.
<b>Guidelines</b>	<p><i>In order to safeguard the rights of the institutions and ensure fair decision-making, external quality assurance is operated in an open and accountable way. Nevertheless, there may be misapprehensions or instances of dissatisfaction about the process or formal outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>Institutions need to have access to processes that allow them to raise issues of concern with the agency; the agencies, need to handle such issues in a</i></p>



	<p><i>professional way by means of a clearly defined process that is consistently applied.</i></p> <p><i>A complaints procedure allows an institution to state its dissatisfaction about the conduct of the process or those carrying it out.</i></p> <p><i>In an appeals procedure, the institution questions the formal outcomes of the process, where it can demonstrate that the outcome is not based on sound evidence, that criteria have not been correctly applied or that the processes have not been consistently implemented.</i></p>
<b>ENQA context</b>	<p>ENQA Agency Reviews should include a clearly defined process for complaints and appeals, which is communicated to the agencies involved.</p>

