A PROPOSAL FOR THE REVISION OF

THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

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Introduction

There are two documents that contain the background of this proposal of revision of the ESG:

 a) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
 b) Mapping the Implementation and Application of the ESG (MAP-ESG Project)

Both can be downloaded from the ENQA website (http://www.enqa.eu/pubs.lasso). Being familiar with these documents will help the reader to better understand what here is proposed.

What is the true nature of the ESG?

Almost all the documents that present or discuss the ESG contain a significant amount of pages devoted to describe what the ESG are and what they are not. The original document of the ESG takes some time to detail the background and the basic principles of the ESG, trying to answer what the standards are. But presenting also the purposes and the objectives of the ESG the document essays to answer a more practical question: what the standards are for? The report of the MAP-ESG project contains many more examples of the different points of view that can be observed among different stakeholders, and this dualism appears again: "What are the ESG?" versus "What are the ESG for?" There is no real contradiction between both questions because the second question can be answered with an operational definition of the ESG, making unnecessary to answer the first question. An operational definition defines something in terms of the specific process or set of validation tests used to determine its presence (its effects) and quantity (impact). Scientist replace the question "What is a kg?" by the question "How a kg can be measured?" in the same way that when one gets a sore throat and takes a pill he or she usually doesn't care very much about "What is the chemical composition of this?" but "What is the expected effect of this?".

Following with the previous analogy, the question is "What will happen to us if we take the ESG pill?" Or in more formal terms, "What are the ESG for?" There is no need to invent the answer because this is already written in standard 1.1. The ESG are there to furnish HEI with *"a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards"*. The ESG also want to influence the values of the HEI because they *"should also commit … explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work"*. And the ESG are very clear, it is not enough that HEI have it in their general policy or values, it is expected that the HEI *"develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality"*. And any strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality is constructed either explicitly or implicitly in, at least, three layers.

- The first layer is the identification and characterization of the **process that should be supervised** as a result of the decision that quality should be improved on one or another specific area. From a conceptual point of view HEI can split all their activities and operations

in as many processes as they want, but from a practical point of view this is limited by the second layer.

- The second layer is made of **the variables that are relevant for the process and at the same time are measurable**. Improvement implies measurement. What it is not measured neither will be observed to grow nor we'll see if it decreases. Sometimes the measure of what matters is direct (i.e. number of papers published), in other cases it may come from a survey (i.e. student satisfaction) or from an external review committee that makes a graded decision (i.e. no/yes/yes+/yes++). Some of the variables can be classified as inputs to the system under analysis, some as outputs. But more important than being able to recognize inputs (causes) and outputs (effects) it is crucial to discover which of the input variables can be changed in such a way that some of the output variables are as close as possible to some desired values. These are the targets. It makes no sense to maintain a process in the list of those we want to improve if there is not a single input that we can dose in order to achieve the desired results. In addition, the selection of variables is directly dependent on the concept or focus of quality: someone can care about the persistence ratio of students, or about the annual cost per student, or about the student satisfaction and employability. But independently of the definition of quality that someone assume, the implementation of a continuous improvement strategy requires (a) some procedures for measuring the important things, (b) a place and a time to compare them to their targets, and to weight the discrepancies or conformities observed between the measured and the expected values, (c) and a culture for making decisions and the power to deploy them. So easy and so difficult, but this is the only way to steer HEI institutions to higher levels of quality.

- The third layer is made of the **targets**. How do HEI fix their objectives? How do they determine what is the expected level of achievement for the most important activities? How do they write the specifications for the most important output variables? To do this, HEI need to sit in a table and talk with the stakeholders. We can easily recognize four groups of stakeholders, two internal and two external. Students and the HEI's staff are the first two groups of internal stakeholders. The external stakeholders are the government and the employers or, in a more general case, the society. It would be easy if all of them pointed to the same direction, but it is not a surprise to recognise that many times each one of these four groups have different expectations from the task that HEI should do. Therefore one of the big tasks that HEI have to face (and one of the tasks where QA agencies can help) is to reconcile all this expectations into a feasible set of specifications that can be effectively used by HEI in the process of continuous enhancement of quality.

Because it is possible to distinguish between process, variables and specifications, now it is easy to recognize that the ESG are mainly about process. Part 1 can be interpreted as the catalogue of the key process that HEI use to deploy the teaching mission. Part 2 describe how should be carried out the process of external evaluation, and Part 3 presents a mixture of the process developed by QA agencies and its own nature or status. No standard in the ESG makes any mention to a specific variable or quantitative indicator that deserves a special attention, neither any of them makes a reference to the control limits of these (yet unspecified) variables. The ESG lists the critical process that HEI cannot left unattended, but they do not

prescribe a detailed procedure for taking care of it. The standards do not contain a list of "key performance indicators", neither fix "control limits" for them. This makes them so widely applicable but also so disappointing to those that expect to find there the recipe of the magic beverage that transforms the ugly duckling into a swan in a jiffy. In addition, it is not reasonable to expect that, at the present time, key performance indicators may be constructed at European level, but it is at national level where this would be possible.

Stages of the revision

The revision is organized in three successive stages, each of them trying to answer some specific demands:

1. Make Part 1 of the ESG a more exhaustive list of the critical process in HEI adding three new standards

2. Revise Part 2 and Part 3 of the ESG to redistribute some text between these two sections, and revise specifically Part 3 to highlight the two types of standards contained there: some of them are directed to specify the nature and status of the QA agencies while others are focused on their activities.

3. Write a completely new a Part 0 of the standards which collects issues related to the higher education authorities' policy.

The table that follows shows the general layout of the revised ESG after these three steps are developed and compares it to their original form (new sections are identified with italics).

ESG	ESG revised version
0. ESG for the policy of higher education	
	0.1 Higher Education Policy
	0.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of higher education policy
	0.3 Assessment of higher education institutions
	0.4 Resources for higher education
	0.5 Information systems
	0.6 Public information
1. ESG for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions	
1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance	1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance
1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards	1.2 Information systems
1.3 Assessment of students	*1.3 Policy and procedures for accountability*
1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff	1.4 Public information
1.5 Learning resources and student support	*1.5 Strategic vision and planning*
1.6 Information systems	1.6 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
1.7 Public information	1.7 Quality assurance of teaching staff
	1.8 Learning resources and student support
	1.9 Learning activities and innovative teaching
	1.10 Assessment of students
2. ESG for the external quality assurance of higher education	
2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures	2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures
2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes	2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes
2.3 Criteria for decisions	2.3 Processes fit for purpose
2.4 Processes fit for purpose	2.4 Criteria for decisions
2.5 Reporting	2.5 Reporting
2.6 Follow-up procedures	2.6 Follow-up procedures
2.7 Periodic reviews	2.7 Periodic reviews
2.8 System-wide analyses	2.8 System-wide analyses
3. ESG for the external quality assurance agencies	
3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education	3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education
3.2 Official status	3.2 Official status
3.3 Activities	3.3 Independence
3.4 Resources	3.4 Resources
3.5 Mission statement	3.5 Accountability procedures
3.6 Independence	3.6 Mission statement
3.7 External quality assurance criteria an processes used by the agencies	3.7 Activities
3.8 Accountability procedures	3.8 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies

First Stage: revision of Part 1

Part 1 of the ESG on internal QA is exhaustive? That is, Part 1 of the ESG covers all the critical aspects of the process carried out by HEI? The answer is a double no. It only focuses on the teaching mission of the HEI, but this is not a surprise because a detailed examination of the ESG reveals that this is fully recognized by the authors when the document reads *"…Finally, the standards and guidelines relate only to the three cycles of higher education described in the Bologna Declaration and are not intended to cover the area of research or general institutional management"*. The need to give an answer to the second no to this question, which acts as the primary driving force for the revision, has its roots in several experiences.

The first one is the recent and always present discussion on QA, transparency tools and rankings. Although standards 1.6 and 1.7 are there, and although numbering in each section is for clarity and does not reflect relevance, they appear at the end of the list. The problem is not that the reader arrives to them later, but that they are probably misplaced and to understand their relevance you have to connect standard 1.6 to standard 1.1. It is not possible to develop standard 1.1 without *collecting, analysing and using relevant information for the effective continuous enhancing of quality*. Improvements and innovations become easier to be implemented when they are supported with adequate data as discussed before. Therefore from the author's point of view standard 1.1 states the general commitment of the institution with quality assurance, but standard 1.6 provides the necessary tools to implement it.

In the same way, standard 1.7 (*...information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programs…*) cannot be too far from standard 1.6 (*…relevant information for the effective management of their programmes…*) and one is tempted initially to move it there, in a third position. But although both standards 1.6 and 1.7 talk about the same thing -the information about the programmes- they focus in opposite directions, standard 1.6 is directed towards the inside of the institution but standard 1.7 directed to the public. Do HEI have a compromise with the "public" (their stakeholders) similar to the compromise that they should have with themselves as pointed out by standard 1.1? The answer is positive. No HEI can face a successful future without complementing his quality commitment with an explicit commitment to accountability, because QA and accountability have become a prerequisite for institutional autonomy. Therefore we should place in a third position a new standard on accountability that can be easily written if one takes as a template standard 1.1. Instead of presenting just that text for this new standard 1.3, here there are the first four standards to see them in a contextual grouping. Standard 1.1 holds the pole position it had, standards 1.6 and 1.7 now become 1.2 and 1.4, and a new standard 1.3 on accountability has been added:

> 1.1 *Policy and procedures for quality assurance*
>
> Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality.
>
> The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

> 1.2 *Information systems*
>
> Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the continuous enhancement of quality and the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

> 1.3 *Policy and procedures for accountability*
>
> Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for their accountability versus the stakeholders (students, higher education authorities, employers and its own staff). They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of transparency in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the communication of the results achieved with the resources made available to them. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available.

> 1.4 *Public information*
>
> Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering. They should also actively disseminate and discuss this information with their stakeholders.

Both standards 1.1 and 1.3 end reclaiming that *"the strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available"* and there is a very simple way to do this: include both quality assurance and accountability in the strategic planning and give them a solid foundation connecting them to the mission, vision and values of the HEI. This issue is so important and too many times remains implicit that it merits a specific text. And this is the proposed new standard 1.5:

> 1.5 *Strategic vision and planning:*
>
> Institutions should determine to which extent their policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and for their accountability contribute to the achievement of its mission. They should also commit themselves explicitly to recognize that the culture of quality, transparency and accountability are part of their values. To achieve this, institutions should include the activities for the continuous enhancement of quality and its accountability into its strategic planning. The strategy, policy and procedures of quality assurance and accountability should have a formal status and be part of their global strategic planning.

Including this new standard in the ESG is important not only by what it literally reads, but by the implicit recognition that HEI should have a clear mission, vision and values as the top layer of their internal quality assurance procedures. While the proposed new standard request that any HEI should recognize how QA can contribute to the achievement of its mission, indirectly it also says that it is not possible to draft a strategic vision without using QA as one of the main tools that may guide the HEI to the achievement of their goals.

Now we arrive at one of the core business of all the HEIs, that is, teaching. This was the second standard in the original document about the approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards. The standard wrote: *"Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards"*. The text can be improved in many ways but here there is an attempt to do it including some of the Bologna keywords: learning outcomes, qualifications framework, ECTS, relevance for the labour market, etc. Three paragraphs have been added to the initial text. The first encompasses knowledge, skills, competences and learning outcomes, and the key question about the level of qualification and the relevance of this for the labour market. The second is about ECTS, students' workload, intensity of training and mobility. Last but not least, the third paragraph recalls our attention to the need for the periodic checking of the achieved learning outcomes and their relevance.

> 1.6 *Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards*
>
> Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.
>
> - Institutions should declare what a student will know, understand and will be able to do on completion of each programme. These learning outcomes should accredit both the qualification level reached and the relevance of the programme for the labour market, as well as its contribution to satisfy the cultural, social and economic needs of their social environment.
> - In order to facilitate the mobility and exchange of students among higher education institutions, these should be able to show the intensity of training and workload of his programmes in ECTS credits.
> - Institutions should have mechanisms for the periodic checking of the learning outcomes achieved by their students in order to guarantee that their programmes and degrees fit their initial purpose.

We can show in a flash how the list of standards in part 1 will be completed. Two standards will be directed to ensure the quality of the resources that are needed to develop the programmes: the human resources –the teaching staff- and all the other resources that students need to complete the learning process. These are standards 1.4 and 1.5 in the original document and now will appear here as standards 1.7 and 1.8. Another set of two standards will be geared to the activities, but only one of them appeared in the original list. This was standard 1.3 about the assessment of students, but it lacks another standard that highlights the importance of selecting properly the teaching and learning activities that support each program. This will be the last new standard added to part 1. Additionally, the standard about the assessment of students is completed with a reference of the materials and documents that the institutions use to assess the students because these are the things that show what students have learned or what they have learned to do, or to do together with other students, and they also show how much they have learned to learn, that is, they are a mirror of the achieved learning outcomes.

1.7 *Quality assurance of teaching staff*
Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

1.8 *Learning resources and student support*
Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

1.9 *Learning activities and innovative teaching*
Institutions should ensure that the learning activities are adequate and appropriate for each programme. Institutions should have strategies to identify and disseminate the best practices and should promote the improvement of the learning activities with an innovative teaching strategy.

1.10 *Assessment of students*
Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently. Because the examination papers and other documents used by the institution to assess the students' progress are an evidence of the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved in each program, these evidences should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

Second stage: revision of Parts 2 and 3

If Part 2 of the ESG is viewed globally as the catalogue of the features that the activities of external quality assurance should exhibit, then this part of the standards could include the standard 3.7 because when this describes how agencies should conduct the external quality assurance procedures at the same time it describes how these procedures should be. In fact, part of the standard 3.7 is already included in Part 2 but not in the text of the standards but in the guidelines of standard 2.4. Therefore the correct options seem to be incorporating into the standard 2.4 some of the text of the standard 3.7, skipping just over the compromise of pre-definition and publicity of the criteria and procedures, which appear explicitly in other standards in Part 2. When this is done, a further step into a more fluid sequence can be achieved permuting the order of standards 2.3 and 2.4. Therefore the proposed modification may be written as follows, the rest of standards in Part 2 remain unchanged.

2.3 *Processes fit for purpose*

All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

2.4 *Criteria for decisions*

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

The need for some revision of standards in Part 3 appears here as the result of the duality of the features exhibited by the standards included in this part of the original ESG document. While some of the standards in Part 3 are clearly oriented to request some "must be" features that should exhibit the QA agencies, others are clearly oriented to guarantee the nature of the activities developed by the QA. If this second pack of standards in Part 3 is analysed with detail, it appears that there is an opportunity for improvement of the standards bringing out the need for any QA to have (like HEI have) their activities linked to its own strategic vision.

Doing this revision step by step, the standards in Part 3 are first reordered. Standard 3.1 maintains this position in Part 3, but standard 3.2 about the official status should be followed by the standards related to independence, resources and accountability, like here:

> 3.1 *Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education*
>
> The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

> 3.2 *Official status*
>
> Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

> 3.3 *Independence*
>
> Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

> 3.4 *Resources*
>
> Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

> 3.5 *Accountability procedures*
>
> Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability. Moreover, agencies should establish appropriate procedures to measure the impact of their activities in the quality of the programmes offered by HEI, and should be able to offer them both innovate procedures and quality assurance procedures designed to assess the quality of HEI's new activities or interests.

This set of five standards focus on the nature of the agencies, while the standards on the activities and on the external quality assurance criteria and processes focus, as their names say, to the nature of the activities developed by the agencies, otherwise already well delimited in Part 2 of the ESG. The hinge between these two parts is the standard that claims that agencies should have a mission statement with clear and explicit goals for their job. The authors' view is that agencies should have more than this, and therefore the original standard on the mission statement may be converted into a more detailed standard that states that QA agencies should have a strategic vision which endorses the external quality assurance activities they undertake. Therefore the mission standard could be written as follows:

3.6 *Mission statement*

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available mission statement. This document should also describe the strategic vision of the agency and the values that sustain its relationship with HEI and their stakeholders. Agencies should revise periodically to which extent their external quality assurance activities contribute to the achievement of its mission.

And the list would end up with the former standards 3.3 and 3.7 renumbered as standards 3.7 and 3.8. Former standard 3.3 on the activities of the agencies has been enriched as a consequence of having transformed Part 1 of the standards into a more exhaustive list of the aspects that can fall into the domain of the internal quality assurance. As a consequence of this, standard 2.1 on the use of internal quality assurance procedures as the basis for the external quality assurance procedures gains a deeper significance. Even the last paragraph in the guidelines of the standard *"…If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise"* sound with a different melody. Is not only that external QA should be based on the internal QA, but that external QA cannot replace internal QA if this does not exist. Therefore, when the internal QA procedures of a HEI are incipient or very weak it appears that the main goal of the agent that conducts the external QA activities (the QA agency) should be to help the HEI in the design and implementation of the internal QA procedures. This is the new text added to the old standard 3.3, now renumbered as 3.7.

Having included part of the description of the criteria and processes of external quality assurance used by agencies in Part 2, now it may appear unnecessary to maintain the original redaction of standard 3.7 into the new standard 3.8. However standards in Part 3 are the central part of the membership criteria used by ENQA and EQAR. Therefore it seems appropriate not to change them more than necessary (apart from renumbering) but just to make a more explicit reference to the mission, vision and values of the QA agency and how their activities contribute to achieve these goals.

3.7 *Activities*

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis. Moreover, external quality assurance procedures cannot be properly deployed when internal quality assurance processes are too weak or in early stages. Therefore the external quality assurance procedures should be designed with a gradual and concatenated structure with the objective of:

- promoting the implementation of internal quality assurance procedures if these does not exist
- consolidate the existing process and giving them a form that can be recognized by the stakeholders and by other institutions
- demonstrate the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance procedures to ensure the quality of the programmes offered by the institutions

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3.8 *External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies*

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

Third stage: the Part 0 of the ESG

The ESG were elaborated and written in a socio-political context that as the ESG spread its use over all the area of influence of the EHEA -which is much wider than the EC- needs to be made explicit and available for those willing to use the ESG as a HEI's system development guide. A second reason for making explicit the underlying hypothesis of the ESG is the political time and the different time scales with which politician and policies change as referred to the time scales of the HEI. For example, a student may take up to five years to complete a bachelor+master track and after he/she goes into the labour market it makes sense to wait for at least two or three years before he/she is asked on how the programmes taken at the university have helped to its employability or professional development.

Rather than trying to fully describe this context, here an attempt is made of writing a Part 0 of the standards that parallels Part 1. This is true in two senses. First, in the same way that standards in Part 1 describes the internal quality assurance fields of action that should be considered by HEI and standard 2.1 has been modified to show that external QA cannot replace the internal QA, here the standards in Part 0 describe the actions that the HEA (Higher Education Authorities) should be able to organize in their area of influence before the QA activities described in Part 1, 2 and 3 appear in scene. Second, standards in Part 0 have been written taking direct inspiration from those in Part 1, as it can be easily observed when you compare both texts. Only standard 1.4 on the quality assurance of the teaching staff has not been transported from Part 1 to Part 0. Therefore Part 0 contains only six standards:

Part 0: European standards and guidelines for the policy of higher education

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0.1 Higher education policy

Higher Education Authorities should have a policy and associated procedures for the organisation of higher education in their respective countries. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of higher education as a public good that generates social and economic value and benefits. To achieve this, HEA should deploy a strategy for the development of higher education and for the interaction of this with other educational levels and the labour market. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available.

0.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of higher education policy

Higher Education Authorities should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their higher education policy and of the legal framework they have set up for higher education institutions.

> *0.3 Assessment of higher education institutions*
>
> Higher Education Authorities should assess the effectiveness and efficiency with which higher education institutions achieve their mission using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

> *0.4 Resources for higher education*
>
> Higher Education Authorities should ensure that the relationship between the resources made available to HEI and the quality of the provision of higher education by the institutions is consistent.

> *0.5 Information systems*
>
> Higher Education Authorities should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their higher education policy considering their national system and the international context.

> *0.6 Public information*
>
> Higher Education Authorities should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about their higher education programmes and activities.

The full text of the revised standard is included in Annex 1, while Annex 2 contains the ESG in its current version.

ANNEX 1: THE REVISED EUROPEAN STANDARDS FOR QA IN THE EHEA

Part 0: European standards and guidelines for the policy of higher education

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0.6 Public information
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Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions.

1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

1.2 Information systems

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the continuous enhancement of quality and the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities

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1.3 Policy and procedures for accountability

Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for their accountability versus the stakeholders (students, higher education authorities, employers and its own staff). They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of transparency in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the communication of the results achieved with the resources made available to them. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available.

1.4 Public information

Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering. They should also actively disseminate and discuss this information with their stakeholders.

1.5 Strategic vision and planning

Institutions should determine to which extent their policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and for their accountability contribute to the achievement of its mission. They should also commit themselves explicitly to recognize that the culture of quality, transparency and accountability are part of their values. To achieve this, institutions should include the activities for the continuous enhancement of quality and its accountability into its strategic planning. The strategy, policy and procedures of quality assurance and accountability should have a formal status and be part of their global strategic planning.

1.6 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards

Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

- Institutions should declare what a student will know, understand and will be able to do on completion of each programme. These learning outcomes should accredit both the qualification level reached and the relevance of the programme for the labour market, as well as its contribution to satisfy the cultural, social and economic needs of their social environment.
- In order to facilitate the mobility and exchange of students among higher education institutions, these should be able to show the intensity of training and workload of his programmes in ECTS credits.
- Institutions should have mechanisms for the periodic checking of the learning outcomes achieved by their students in order to guarantee that their programmes and degrees fit their initial purpose.

1.7 Quality assurance of teaching staff

Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students is qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

1.8 Learning resources and student support

Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

1.9 Learning activities and innovative teaching

Institutions should ensure that the learning activities are adequate and appropriate for each programme. Institutions should have strategies to identify and disseminate the best practices and should promote the improvement of the learning activities with an innovative teaching strategy.

1.10 Assessment of students

Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently. Because the examination papers and other documents used by the institution to assess the students' progress are an evidence of the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved in each program, these evidences should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

Part 2: European standards for the external quality assurance of higher education

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2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures

External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

2.3 Processes fit for purpose:

All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report..

2.4 Criteria for decisions

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

2.5 Reporting

Reports should be published and should be written in a style, which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

2.6 Follow-up procedures

Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

2.7 Periodic reviews

External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

2.8 System-wide analyses

Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

Part 3: European standards for external quality assurance agencies

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3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education

The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

3.2 Official status

Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

3.3 Independence

Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

3.4 Resources

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

3.5 Accountability procedures

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability. Moreover, agencies should establish appropriate procedures to measure the impact of their activities in the quality of the programmes offered by HEI, and should be able to offer them both innovate procedures and quality assurance procedures designed to assess the quality of HEI's new activities or interests.

3.6 Mission statement

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available mission statement. This document should also describe the strategic vision of the agency and the values that sustain its relationship with HEI and their stakeholders. Agencies should revise periodically to which extent their external quality assurance activities contribute to the achievement of its mission.

3.7 Activities

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis. Moreover, external quality assurance procedures cannot be properly deployed when internal quality assurance processes are too weak or in early stages. Therefore the external quality assurance procedures should be designed with a gradual and concatenated structure with the objective of

- promoting the implementation of internal quality assurance procedures if these does not exist
- consolidate the existing process and giving them a form that can be recognized by the stakeholders and by other institutions
- demonstrate the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance procedures to ensure the quality of the programmes offered by the institutions

3.8 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

ANNEX 2: THE EUROPEAN STANDARDS FOR QA IN THE EHEA

(http://www.enqa.eu/pubs_esg.lasso)

Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal QA within HEI institutions

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1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance:

Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards:

Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

1.3 Assessment of students:

Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff:

Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

1.5 Learning resources and student support:

Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

1.6 Information systems:

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

1.7 Public information:

Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

Part 2: European standards for the external quality assurance of higher education

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2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures:

External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes:

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

2.3 Criteria for decisions:

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

2.4 Processes fi t for purpose:

All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

2.5 Reporting:

Reports should be published and should be written in a style, which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

2.6 Follow-up procedures:

Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

2.7 Periodic reviews:

External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

2.8 System-wide analyses:

Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general fi ndings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

Part 3: European standards for external quality assurance agencies

3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education:

The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

3.2 Official status:

Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

3.3 Activities:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.

3.4 Resources:

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

3.5 Mission statement:

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

3.6 Independence:

Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies:

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

3.8 Accountability procedures:

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.