

Safeguarding Quality Assurance Principles in Higher Education

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QA in HE and VET: Promoting Trust Between the Sectors?

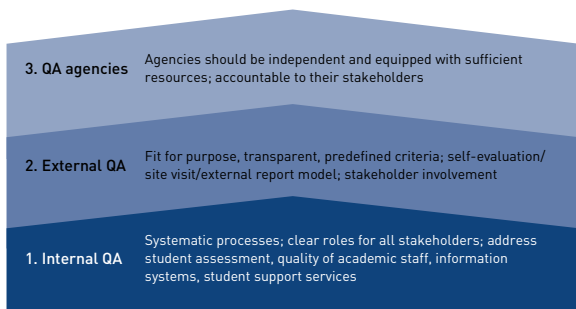
Outline

1. European principles for QA in HE – the ESG
2. How are they safeguarded – the role of EQAR
3. Tying it together – QA as a key support to QF

1. European Standards and Guidelines for QA (ESG)

- Adopted by Bologna ministers in 2005
- Based on a proposal by the key stakeholders (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE - "E4 Group")
- Agreed principles for quality assurance (QA) in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
 - Twin purpose of QA: quality enhancement & accountability
 - Subsidiarity principle – not prescriptive, no uniform system
 - Standards for QA processes – complementary to Qualifications Framework for the EHEA (QF-EHEA) and European Qualifications Framework for LLL (EQF)

ESG – Essential Principles



Common points ...



EQF Common Principles	European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)
External monitoring bodies or agencies carrying out quality assurance should be subject to regular review .	EQAR registration renewed every 5 years 3.8 Accountability procedures
Quality assurance should include context, input, process and output dimensions , while giving emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes	1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards 1.3 Assessment of students 1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff 1.5 Learning resources and student support
Quality assurance systems should include the following elements: – clear and measurable objectives and standards ; [...] – widely accessible evaluation results .	2.3 Criteria for decisions 2.5 Reporting

... and Differences



- EQF Common Principles:
 - Explicit focus on Learning Outcomes
- European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)
 - More detailed, especially guidelines
 - Independence of QA agencies

NB: ESG are currently being revised (new edition in 2015)

2. European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)



Register of quality assurance agencies that comply substantially with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)

- Established by E4 at Ministers' request
- Jointly governed by stakeholders (E4, social partners) and EHEA governments
- External review of agencies by independent experts
- Independent Register Committee
 - Composed of 11 quality assurance experts
 - Coming from different stakeholder perspectives
 - Take all decisions related to registration



Mission and Objectives



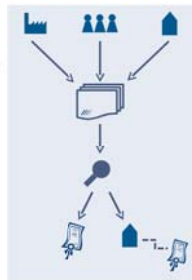
Promoting the further development of a coherent and flexible quality assurance system for Europe as a whole

Transparency and Information

- Information on bona fide agencies
- Prevent „accreditation mills“ from gaining credibility
- Institutions to choose a QA agency

Trust and Recognition

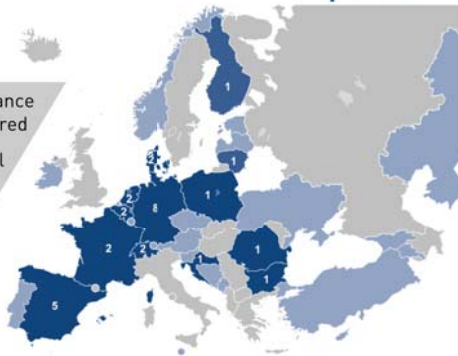
- Enhance mutual trust amongst quality assurance (QA) agencies and institutions
- Acceptance of QA results/decisions
- Support recognition of qualifications and periods of study
- Allow registered QAAs to operate across the entire EHEA



Agencies and Governments



- 29 quality assurance agencies registered
- 31 Governmental Members



3. QA and QF Working Together



Bucharest Communiqué 2012:

- **allow EQAR-registered agencies to perform their activities** across the EHEA; **recognise their QA decisions** on joint/double degree programmes
- **automatic recognition** of comparable academic degrees, building on the tools of the Bologna framework, as a long-term goal.

BFUG Work Plan 2012-2015:

- **improve the interaction between qualifications frameworks, quality assurance**, and the recognition of qualifications and transparency instruments.

Irish Presidency Conference on QA in QF, March 2013:

- review and make proposals to **strengthen the common principles of quality assurance** to be applied across HE and VET

Recognition of EQAR-registered QAA's

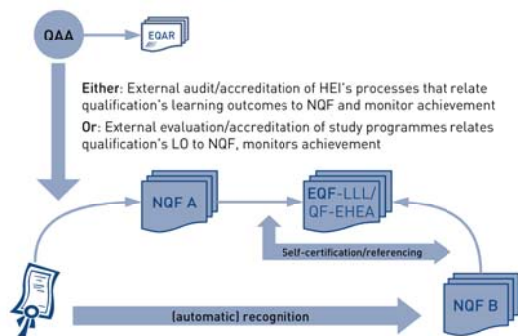


All EQAR-registered agencies can evaluate/accredit/audit HEI's ...

- ... for all or most external quality assurance obligations in: Armenia, Austria, Flemish Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Poland, Romania
- ... limited to joint degrees or cross-border programmes in: Denmark, Germany

Austria	Flemish Comm.	Kazakhstan
Universities can choose freely from amongst EQAR-registered agencies for quality audits	Foreign EQAR-registered QA agency carries out review, but NVAO (national agency) makes final decision	National register of licensed QA agencies, EQAR-registration precondition for foreign European agencies

Forming a Sound Basis for (Automatic) Recognition



Outlook



- **Revision of the ESG**
 - Clearer reference to Bologna tools, especially QF
 - Clarity and technical improvements
- **Analysis: Recognition of EQAR-registered QA Agencies**
 - Legal frameworks in EHEA countries
 - Good practice examples
- **Pathfinder group automatic recognition**
 - Analyse existing practice
 - Example: Flemish Community of Belgium



Thank you for your attention!

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