

# Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

## Summary list of standards

### Part 1: Standards for internal quality assurance

#### 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

#### 1.2 Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

#### 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

#### 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

#### 1.5 Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

#### 1.6 Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

#### 1.7 Information management

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

#### 1.8 Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

#### 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

#### 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

## **Part 2: Standards for external quality assurance**

### **2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance**

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance described in Part 1 of the ESG.

### **2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose**

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.

### **2.3 Implementing processes**

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include

- a self-assessment or equivalent;
- an external assessment normally including a site visit;
- a report resulting from the external assessment;
- a consistent follow-up.

### **2.4 Peer-review experts**

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

### **2.5 Criteria for outcomes**

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.

### **2.6 Reporting**

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.

### **2.7 Complaints and appeals**

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

## **Part 3: Standards for quality assurance agencies**

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

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.

### **3.2 Official status**

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

### **3.3 Independence**

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.

### **3.4 Thematic analysis**

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

### **3.5 Resources**

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

**3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct**

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

**3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies**

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.