

Set of standards for QA agencies: a comparison

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- Several networks of QA agencies
 - several codes
- Degree of transparency and compatibility?

Between networks:

- Differences in standards
- Differences in interpretation and implementation of standards

Within networks:

- Different interpretations and implementations of standards

Missing:

a general accepted terminology

Comparison:

- INQAAHE
- S&G EHEA = ENQA
- ECA
- APQN
- ASPA
- OECD-UNESCO

The mission statement (1)

Considerations:

- **Explicit “written” statement of goals and objectives** is requested.
- In addition, when drawing up the mission statement, the **cultural and historic context** within which the quality assurance agency has to work has to be taken into account.
- **QA has to be the main activity** of the agency.
- **Policy and strategic plan** that has to be drawn up

Point of interest:

- “main activity of the organisation “

The relation between the QAA and the HEI (2)

Considerations:

- QA is the **primary responsibility** of the HEI.
- The QAA have to respect the **autonomy** of the institutions.
- Regular **consultations of stakeholders** are explicitly mentioned.
- The eventual result of the QA has to lead to an attitude of **accountability and improvement.**

Point of interest:

- Only attitude of openness, communication and mutual respect → perception remains in line with the principle.

Decision-making (3)

Considerations:

- Criteria and procedures have been **laid down beforehand** and made **public**.
- The **SER** (Self Evaluation Report) and the **predefined terms of reference**, available to the public, form the basis of the external evaluation.
- **Independence in decision-making** and the **assessment of the panel** are primordial.

Point of interest:

- independence, what does it mean ?

The external committee (4)

Considerations:

- The **composition of the panels** is in agreement with the specific **terms of reference** and the aims of the external evaluation.
- Most codes request that explicit rules for the appointment of panel members are laid down.
- Attention for the formulation of **“no conflict of interest”**.
- The principle of **independence of panels** throughout the evaluation process is mentioned in all codes

Point of interest:

- Independence of panel members: “the more independent, the less expertise”.
- The presence of students in the panels

The public face (5)

Considerations:

- Documents, criteria, procedures as well as processes, review decisions and outcomes have to be made public.

Point of interest:

- the decisions have to be made public.... What does that mean?

Documentation (6)

Considerations:

- **Documents** as regards criteria , procedures and processes have to **be available.**
- Sufficiently comprehensive description of what the SER has to consist of, with clear **listing of expectations and requirements.**
- If the assessment **leads to accreditation,** the **rules of both processes** have to be **made transparent.**

Resources (7)

Considerations:

There have to be **sufficient means to develop the activities freely and independently**. Such means also have to be **freely available**.

- The term 'means' should be interpreted as both **human and financial** resources

System of appeal (8)

Considerations:

- A system of **appeal** has to be **in place** and all parties **must know it.**

QA of the agency (9)

Considerations:

- The **system has to be continuous.**
- The evaluation of the QAA has to be based on a **SER and an external evaluation.**
- The external evaluation is **cyclical.**
- The QA policy has to be made known to the public and **feedback on the evaluation to stakeholders** is essential.

Point of interest:

- Who conducts the evaluations, what are the rules?
- What will be the consequences of a negative assessment ?

Collaboration with other agencies(10)

Considerations:

- Collaboration between QAA, exchange of good practice or experts, inform each other about evaluation decisions.
- Allow follow up of international providers.
- OECD promotes the building of networks and exchange of information, panel members and experience in the context of cross-border education.

Point of interest:

- Attention for information regarding diploma and accreditation mills.

Official status (11)*

Considerations:

- **formally recognised** by the competent **public authorities in the EHEA** as an agency responsible for external quality assurance.
- Established on a **legal basis**.
- Complying with any requirements set by the legislative

Point of interest:

- Specific aspect of the Bologna policy ...

Elements of external review of QAA (12)*

Considerations:

- The ENQA code states that the agencies have to be subjected to an external review at least once every five years.
- The nationally recognised agencies can be reviewed on a national basis : the national authorities organise the review, but, in addition to any “national” criteria and standards, the QA conditions as laid down in the S&G have to be met.
- The panel has to have an international dimension .
- The results of the review have to be incorporated in an evaluation report that is available to the public.

Point of interest:

- In conformity with other networks?

Issues specifically related to accreditation (13)*

Considerations:

- The networks that focus on accreditation usually impose “specific” standards or points of reference in addition to the standards and criteria mentioned above. These obviously do not conflict with the general conditions, but rather specify them

Comparison of QA standards between networks

		INQA/AHE	ENQA	ECA	APQN	APSA	OECD
1	Mission Statement	1	3.5;3.3	1;13	1;2	1	
2	Relation QAA/HEI	2	2.2;2.6	16	1	1;2	20.4
3	Decision Making	3	3.6;3.7	3;4;14	7	4;6	
4	External Committee	4	2.4;3.6;3.8	15	4	7	20.7
5	Public face	5	3.7	8;9	7	9	20.4
6	Documentation	6		17	6	7	20.7;20.1
7	Resources	7	3.4	5	6	6	
8	Appeal	8	3.7	10		6	
9	QA	9	2.8;3.8	6;7	8	2;5	20.6
10	Collaboration with other QAA	10	x	11		2	20.2;20.3

Comparison of QA standards between networks

		INQAAHE	ENQA	ECA	APQN	APSA	OECD
11	Recognition by authorities/ Status		3.2	2	1		
12	Elements of external review		x				
13	Issues specifically relating to accreditation			12;13;14			
14	Independence	3;4	3.6	3	5	1	
15	Professional staff				3		
16	Cross border						x

Conclusions

- Comparing the different QAA networks, transparency of QA standards for QAA is respectable and acceptable
- Comparability of QA standards of several QAA networks is relatively high provided that
 - There is room for diversity
 - There is a mutual trust
 - Networks are operating within a framework with clear and verifiable agreements