

INQAAHE International Standards and Guidelines of Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (ISGs)



EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT



Organization	Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA)
Place	Taipei, Taiwan
Date of the visit	Monday 8 th April 2024 to Wednesday 10 th April 2024

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INTRODUCTION

INQAAHE's ISG External Evaluation Process

The Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA) requested an external evaluation of its performance in compliance with the International Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (ISGs) by the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). TWAEA carried out the self-assessment process and submitted the Self-Evaluation Report and a list of supporting documentation to INQAAHE on 23 September 2023.

The external evaluation of TWAEA was undertaken following the ISGs issued by INQAAHE in 2022 (Annex 1. International Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education). The review was carried out by an independent Review Panel of international experts in the areas of evaluation and quality assurance in higher education (Annex 2. Composition of the ISG Review Panel). The Review Panel consisted of the following:

- **Achim Hopbach (Chair of the Review Panel):** Independent Consultant. Former Managing Director of AQ Austria and of the German Accreditation Council. Former President of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA).
- **Fiona Crozier (Secretary of the Review Panel):** Independent Consultant. Former Head of International at the Quality Assurance Agency, UK. Former Director of Quality at University College Cork, Ireland. Former Vice-President of ENQA.
- **Eddy Chong Siong Choy (QA Expert):** Executive Dean of the Faculty of Business and Law. Former Director, INQAAHE Board. Quality Evaluation Panel member of Macau Special Administrative Region. ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) Council member and Lead Assessor.

The site visit was held from 8-10 April 2024. The agenda included a total of thirteen interviews with TWAEA's key internal and external stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education (MOE), senior management, staff, higher education institution (HEI) representatives, peer reviewers and representatives of national and international organizations associated with TWAEA and the MOE. Annex 3 provides the agenda for the site visit and the interview sessions conducted by the Review Panel (Annex 3. Schedule of the Site Visit). A final session was also held with TWAEA

authorities, during which the Review Panel provided a summary of the main outcomes of the process.

Based on the self-assessment document, additional evidence and the information gathered during the site visit, the Review Panel drafted the first version of the external review report, which was shared with TWAEA for verification before being submitted to INQAAHE's Board of Directors for final approval.

About Taiwan's Higher Education System

Taiwan's higher education (HE) system is divided into two main categories: general HE and technological and vocational HE, which are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (MOE). General HE typically consists of universities and colleges, whereas technological and vocational HE encompasses technological and vocational universities and colleges, as well as junior colleges. In 2023, Taiwan had a total of 148 higher education institutions (HEIs) serving over 1.14 million students.

The 2005 amendment to Article 5 of the University Act has shifted responsibility for quality assurance (QA) to the HEIs with the aim of strengthening their internal quality assurance (IQA) systems. The MOE established a QA agency (the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan - HEEACT) in 2005 to assess HEIs and make the results public. Since 2010, the MOE has also recognized TWAEA as a professional evaluation agency responsible primarily for the accreditation of technological and vocational HEIs.

In 2017, the MOE announced that HEIs could choose to evaluate their departments and programs themselves, providing them with more autonomy and allowing them to establish their own characteristics and missions. Accordingly, HEIs can incorporate their own indicators and seek recognized professional accreditors for external review or even pursue self-accreditation. A number of departments and programs have since sought TWAEA accreditation, as evidenced by the evaluation results posted on TWAEA's website (<https://iqas.twaea.org.tw/en/announcement>). External evaluation at institutional level remains compulsory.

About the Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA)

The Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA) was established in August 2003 with approval from the Ministry of the Interior in Taiwan. It is a non-governmental and non-profit membership association dedicated to providing evaluation services and developing quality assurance (QA) mechanisms and knowledge regarding evaluation. The Ministry of Education (MOE) officially recognized TWAEA as a certified professional evaluation agency in 2010. Since then, TWAEA has gone through re-recognition twice by the MOE in 2015 and 2020.

TWAEA's vision of '*Toward an Outstanding Evaluation Agency with Credibility*' is supported by its management philosophy of 'proactive evaluation', 'insightful perspective', 'theory cultivation', and 'creative practice', which has since evolved informally into the Association's mission as stated by the Chairman of TWAEA Board during the interview. Since 2005, TWAEA has been responsible for a number of evaluation projects, including (1) a comprehensive evaluation of technical universities; (2) a comprehensive evaluation of technological institutes and junior colleges; (3) a follow-up evaluation of technical and vocational education institutions; (4) recognition of self-evaluation result of technological institutions; and (5) accreditation of degree-granting programs. TWAEA also obtained ISO9001:2008 and ISO9001:2015 certification in 2009 and 2019, respectively.

TWAEA's work on QA also includes research and international cooperation activities. Further information on these activities may be found under Standards 3 and 4 of the ISGs.

To promote international cooperation, TWAEA has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with nine quality assurance agencies to date and worked with the Macau's regulator in higher education to accredit programs and an institution. Further information may be found under Standard 4 of the ISGs.

TWAEA became a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) in 2011, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) International Quality Group (CIQG) in 2012.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following receipt of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and additional evidence and having visited TWAEA in April 2024 to conduct a site visit, the Review Panel had sufficient information to come to conclusions against each of the standards in the International Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (ISGs) by the International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE ISGs).

Overall, the Review Panel observed a well-functioning agency that is respected by its stakeholders both internal and external and which provided evidence of several examples of good practice. These include support for the Taiwanese higher education (HE) sector through accreditation processes that respect and support institutional autonomy while offering a means for improvement, particularly of internal quality assurance systems, and a regular review and revision of both the processes and standards and indicators used for accreditation. TWAEA also takes a dynamic approach to international work, which impacts positively across the region and also nationally.

The Review Panel believes that TWAEA can further improve its role and function in the Taiwanese HE sector, particularly with regard to its strategic planning. While the Association has a clear vision and mission, these have not been reviewed for some time and, in the absence of a strategic plan and measurable key performance indicators (KPIs), it is unclear how TWAEA would address its strategic objectives quantitatively across all of its activities. A review of the vision and mission and development of a formal strategic plan will also assist the Association in determining where and how it will maximize the impact of its activities, including its international work.

The Review Panel also believes that TWAEA could build on the analysis it has done of its stakeholders and their level of involvement in the Association's work to ensure that it is maximizing the use of expertise from each stakeholder group, including students.

The Review Panel would like to take this opportunity to thank TWAEA for the documentation provided and for the open, honest, and transparent approach that it and its stakeholders took to the interviews. This reinforced the Review Panel's view of a credible and trustworthy agency that is open to improvements at all levels.

ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH INQAAHE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (ISGS)

I. Legitimacy of the External Quality Assurance Provider (EQAP)

1.1 Mission, Governance & Organization

The EQAP is a recognized, credible organization, trusted by key stakeholders: the government, tertiary education providers (TEPs) and the public at large. Its governance, structure, and operations enable effective and efficient operations in line with its mission.

The Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA) is a membership-based association founded in August 2003, with approval from the Ministry of the Interior in Taiwan, as a non-governmental and non-profit organization under the Civil Associations Act. Besides being recognized officially by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan as a certified evaluation agency in 2010, TWAEA is recognized by several quality assurance (QA) bodies and networks worldwide [i.e., International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE), Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) International Quality Group (CIQG)].

TWAEA's vision/mission is: 'Toward an Outstanding Evaluation Agency with Credibility', which is supported by its mission of 'proactive evaluation,' 'insightful perspective,' 'theory cultivation,' and 'creative practice.' The mission and objectives are published on the TWAEA website. To support its vision/mission, TWAEA also conducts other projects for local authorities, such as those relating to training, tourism and hotels, nursing institutions, and sports groups.

TWAEA is led by a Board of Directors consisting of 15 members, which include university chairmen, university presidents, chair professors, honorary professors, professors, and an industry representative. The Board is supported by a Managing Supervisor and four Supervisors who are professors at their respective universities. Members of the Board and Supervisors are elected by the General Assembly.

The Secretariat is led by a Secretary-General and assisted by an Assistant Secretary-General. TWAEA's day-to-day operations are divided into four divisions: (1) business; (2) projects; (3) administration and accounting; and (4) international affairs. It was clarified during the site visit that TWAEA's staff in the business and project divisions are involved in institutional and program accreditation projects, supported by staff from the international affairs division for joint accreditation projects.

TWAEA's quality monitoring is incorporated into its quality control and assurance system, which comprises project quality monitoring, response and feedback, data and (ISO) file management, and information security management. Documents (meeting records, attendance sheets, and meeting minutes) are retained.

Analysis

It was clear to the Review Panel that TWAEA is an established legal entity in Taiwan. Statements to that effect in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) were reinforced in various meetings, including one with the HEEACT where the Review Panel was informed that the four evaluation agencies that are approved by the MOE are of equal standing. A representative of the MOE informed the Review Panel that, *"TWAEA is relevant and has a significant role to play in pushing the evaluation of institutions and programs to improve teaching quality in Taiwan"*, demonstrating evidence of the highest level of TWAEA's legitimacy as an accreditation agency.

In the Review Panel's view, the Association's vision is consistent with its activities. However, during the site visit, the Review Panel was informed that its vision has not been revisited since TWAEA's inception. This does not render it invalid, but the Review Panel was told that it had become an embedded part of the Association's ethos and this, together with a lack of a formal strategic plan, led the Review Panel to the view that, although the Association currently functions effectively as evidenced by the high esteem in which it is held by all stakeholders, its very effective accreditation processes and its impactful international activities, overall, its planning and risk management could be improved to ensure continued effectiveness and stability into the future. On request, the Review Panel was provided with supplementary information about the TWAEA's strategy but this did not include any performance indicators and, although a SWOT analysis was included, it did not refer to some of the key threats that the Association faces (see below). In one interview, the Review Panel was informed that TWAEA intends to become a 'leading' evaluation agency by 2025. Without an explicit strategic plan, it is difficult to define 'leading'. An explicit strategic plan would also serve as a mandate for TWAEA to identify its core activities and address pressing issues, given the demographic challenges mentioned by various stakeholders during the interviews (one example is the declining birth rates), which will have significant implications on TWAEA's future work, as well as its directions and the resources required.

The Review Panel was also informed during multiple interviews that a further key risk for the Association is that the rate of funding has declined and there are too many colleges in Taiwan

being closed each year. This will be challenging for QA agencies in the future as the need for accreditation of institutions and programs drops, and a re-evaluation of mission thus becomes necessary.

The Review Panel was provided with the aforementioned information by external interviewees and not by anyone from within TWAEA. This cemented the Review Panel's view that a more structured strategic planning, considering TWAEA's objectives with measurable performance indicators and the existing risk assessment plan will be key to the Association's future success. In addition, it is believed that the development of such a strategic plan will provide TWAEA with the opportunity to revisit its original vision to ensure that it continues to be relevant in the future. The Review Panel stresses that it was clear that the Association's operations are not arbitrary and without orientation and that it did not find any evidence to suggest that the Association is not operating effectively. However, the panel is of the view that this somewhat informal, verbalised consensus would be improved in the future by a systematic formalization to guide operations in the shape of a formal strategic plan. This is a key area of its findings, and many of the subsequent recommendations and suggestions lead back to this point.

The evidence provided to the Review Panel regarding the Association's governance and organizational structure demonstrated the Board's direct oversight of the University and College Accreditation Council and the University and Science and Technology Accreditation Council; the Approval Review of Quality Assurance in Higher Education Committee, the Internal Audit Training and Certification Committee, the International Joint Accreditation Steering Committee, the Awards Steering Committee, and other committees based on specific projects, and TWAEA's operations. Although the INQAAHE ISGs review focused solely on the specialized committees (Approval Review Committees for Quality Assurance at the institutional and program levels, as well as the Institutional Evaluation Steering Committee), the Review Panel believes that TWAEA's overall governance and organizational structures are sound. However, during the interviews, it became clear to the Review Panel that there was some confusion around the roles of the specialized committees and also around some of TWAEA's processes, for example the approval process for members of the reviewer pool and the appointment period to a specialized committee. The Review Panel believes that such confusion could be easily remedied and suggests that the Association ensures that all members of such committees are clear about their own role and about the processes undertaken by TWAEA.

In relation to clear and independent decision-making, the Review Panel saw and heard evidence of policies such as that for avoiding conflict of interest for the Board of Directors, specialized

committees, and staff (contained in TWAEA’s Charter). Directors and specialized committee members are obliged to sign the Code of Ethics Agreement and staff the Confidentiality Obligation Agreement. Members of the Approval Review Committee also indicated that reviewers are not supposed to accept gifts from the evaluated TEP and that the reviewers’ identities are not disclosed to the institution until ten days before the site visit.

1.2 Resources

The EQAP has adequate resources – physical, financial and human – to carry out its mission.

TWAEA has 56 staff, 49 of whom hold full-time positions. The average length of work experience is 15 years (around 32% have worked for five or fewer years), and all have Bachelor’s or higher degrees. Workload is allocated based on the staff members’ specific expertise and backgrounds. The majority of staff work in the business division, followed by projects (14.3%), administrative and accounting (8.9%), and international affairs (5.4%).

The Association maintains a database of 3,500 experts representing the industry (25%), government (3%), and academia (72%) as reviewers.

Analysis

The Review Panel was informed during the site visit that staff satisfaction is gauged during the performance appraisal period, which occurs twice a year. It was confirmed that training and development is available for staff and that the type and level of training they are offered depends on their professional needs to carry out their work successfully. A monthly lunch is also organized to enhance collaborations and learning between staff.

In the view of the Review Panel, following the site visit and having viewed documentary evidence, TWAEA possesses adequate physical (office space), virtual, and financial resources. It is equipped with adequate information technology and network facilities, and appropriate finance and accounting systems and experts are in place for managing projects and budgets. However, the Review Panel did note that TWAEA is aware that any significant growth in personnel will have an impact on office space.

1.3 Internal QA and Accountability

The EQAP has in place policies and mechanisms for its internal quality assurance that demonstrate a continuing effort to maintain and improve the quality and integrity of its activities.

TWAEA's internal and external quality assurance (QA) systems are based on ISO9001 certification, as well as through meta-evaluation mechanisms and evaluations conducted by external experts.

A quality improvement strategy map has been developed by TWAEA, focusing on process monitoring, continuous improvement, internal control, and learning and growth. Self-review is conducted following a comprehensive approach based on the PDCA (Plan, Do Check, Act) methodology for the Association's business and the standards used for assessment. For the latter, one of the examples provided is program accreditation, where TWAEA has developed the Higher Education Quality Certification (HEQC) project, which provides flexibility to tertiary education providers (TEPs) to determine the evaluation standards based on their characteristics, attributes, and resources and to promote self-improvement among the TEPs (see also criteria 2.1 and 2.2). Adjustments made to the evaluation procedures and methods due to the COVID-19 pandemic were subject to this methodology and online evaluation was carried out on Macau University of Science and Technology's programs during the pandemic. Epidemic prevention measures were also implemented, i.e., anti-epidemic partition between reviewers, social distancing, and other prevention measures.

According to the *Principles for the Review of Domestic and Foreign Professional Evaluation Agencies*, the Ministry of Education (MOE) also conducts external reviews on TWAEA every five years to determine its status as a professional evaluation agency. Additionally, TWAEA fosters a quality culture through its ISO9001 certification, self-assessments, and external financial and tax audits.

Analysis

The Review Panel noted a variety of activities that evidenced TWAEA's approach to internal quality assurance (IQA) and self-review. These included a reference made to Part 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) in conducting self-evaluation, in which experts from the Japan Universities Accreditation Association (JUAA) and the Federation for Self-Financing Tertiary Education (FSTE) were engaged in the evaluation process. The resulting report was further reviewed by external experts from Japan and Hong Kong, thus adding significant external input into the self-evaluation process.

TWAEA has also invited a consultant to participate in evaluating technical universities to provide external reflection on its processes.

While initially the Review Panel found the scope of modalities covered by TWAEA's standards to be unclear, it was clarified during the site visit that its standards include distance education and that research is the core of evaluation for postgraduate programs (Implementation Plan for the 2023 Academic Year Institutional Evaluation of Technological Institutions - SD2; Standards and Indicators for the HEQC Project - SD3, and Indicators for Institutional Evaluation of Technological Institutions - SD4).

In the view of the Review Panel, following the site visit and having viewed documentary evidence, TWAEA has implemented a variety of internal quality assurance mechanisms that cover appropriately the agency's operations. However, the Review Panel believes that a stronger integration of the mechanisms into one system would strengthen efficiency and foster overarching institutional learning.

I.4 Commendations

None.

I.5 Suggestions

- The Review Panel suggests that TWAEA clarifies the roles played by different specialized committees and their knowledge of the processes involved in accreditation.
- The Review Panel suggests publishing the self-review report that it writes about its operations and the resulting action plans on TWAEA's website for greater transparency and to enhance public trust.

I.6 Recommendations

- The Review Panel recommends that TWAEA review its vision and mission to take into consideration future trends and develops an explicit strategic plan with measurable key performance indicators based on its ten strategies, SWOT analysis, and the risk assessment plan.
- In relation to the above, the Review Panel also recommends the integration of the existing internal quality assurance (IQA) policies into one overarching IQA policy and that this is linked back to the monitoring of the implementation of the strategic plan, with a view to enhancing the Association's current work.

I.7 Conclusion of the Review Panel

The Review Panel confirms that TWAEA is a recognized, credible organization, trusted by its stakeholders, i.e., the Ministry of Education, tertiary education providers (TEPs), students, and national and international partners). TEPs, in particular, recognize the value of accreditation. They stated during the interview that they will continue to employ TWAEA for institutional accreditation even if such accreditation is made voluntary. Student representatives, on the other hand, view accreditation as important for their career or mobility purposes. TWAEA has a clear vision and mission, which are underpinned by ten strategic objectives. However, in the absence of a strategic plan, it is unclear how TWAEA would address these strategic objectives quantitatively across all of its activities. As TWAEA develops its strategic plan, it provides an opportunity to revisit its vision and mission as the association continues to evolve. TWAEA has sufficient resources (physical, financial, and human) to carry out its mission and activities. It also employs internal quality assurance (IQA) to maintain and improve the quality and integrity of its activities. However, IQA is not integrated and does not provide a structured and clear picture of how the Association approaches IQA in each of its initiatives. The preceding suggestions and recommendations will help TWAEA establish itself as a leading evaluation agency.

II. The EQAP's Framework for External Reviews of the Quality of TEPs

2.1 The relationship between the EQAP and Tertiary Education Providers (TEPs)

The EQAP recognizes TEPs as having primary responsibility for quality and relevance and providing support in promoting trust and credibility.

A milestone in the development of quality assurance (QA) and accreditation in the Taiwanese higher education system was 2017, when the Ministry of Education (MOE) decided to replace compulsory program accreditation with compulsory institutional accreditation and to give the tertiary education providers (TEPs) the responsibility to review their programs internally. TWAEA responded to this change by revising two sets of standards and indicators: one for compulsory institutional evaluation and one for voluntary program evaluation:

- At institutional level: Indicators for Institutional Evaluation of Technological Institutions
- At program level: Standards and Indicators for the Higher Education Quality Certification (HEQC) project (to be presented more in detail under Criterion 2.2).

The objectives of the processes are as follows:

- Shaping Distinctiveness with Substance - Establishing a clear positioning to create value.
- Emphasizing Learning Outcomes - Ensuring quality to lay the foundation for growth.
- Pursuing Continuous Improvement - Striving for excellence and sustainable development.

The indicators for institutional evaluation require the TEPs to define their aims and objectives, including indicators (Standard 1) and to translate these aims and objectives into the areas of operations addressed in Standards 2 and 3 (Ensuring and Supporting Teacher's Teaching Quality, Ensuring & Enhancing Student Learning Quality), whereas Standard 4 requires the TEPs to implement a sustainable internal quality assurance (IQA) system.

The standards and indicators for program evaluation follow a similar structure; especially in Standards 3 and 4, which explicitly require TEPs to implement improvement strategies and a sustainable IQA system.

As a common feature, the core indicators remain generic and do not prescribe processes or instruments in detail which gives the TEPs the autonomy to design the internal processes, instruments, and systems that suit them best. Another common feature is that the standards about the various operations are set within a framework of defining aims and objectives on one

side and of sustaining an IQA system on the other side. This structure uses the ADRI (Approach, Deployment, Results, Improvement) approach as an inbuilt principle.

Analysis

During the site visit, the Review Panel learned that the TEPs appreciate the shift from compulsory reviews at program level to institutional level and, because of the requirement that these support the TEPs to achieve their own goals in learning and teaching, significant effort has been made to implement IQA mechanisms that will support institutional autonomy. The TEPs also confirmed that the evaluations are an important feature of quality assurance that require them to maintain efforts to improve their operations.

A specific feature of TWAEA's approach is the opportunity for TEPs to add distinctive core indicators that allow them to showcase their unique characteristics, attributes, identity, and mission. This will be addressed specifically under criterion 2.2. The Review Panel learned during the site visit that this approach is highly appreciated by the TEPs because it allows them to be measured more precisely against their own aims and objectives, based on a preparatory discussion with TWAEA about potential and applicable additional indicators.

Although standards and indicators are at a generic level and additional indicators can be applied, this does not mean that the application of core standards is arbitrary in the reviews. The core body of the standards addresses features that are relevant to all (see criterion 2.2), and core values in higher education, such as academic freedom and social responsibility, are also addressed, however not always very explicitly. Social responsibility is included in various indicators, whereas academic freedom is addressed in explanations rather than in indicators.

As stated in Pages 35 and 36 of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and confirmed during the site visit, this design of the standards supports the academic autonomy of the TEPs, and the TEPs' primary responsibility to define their aims and objectives and to develop and implement internal operations that are aligned with the objectives. Institutional representatives who met the Review Panel confirmed unanimously that the approach not only gives them autonomy but also requires them to take responsibility for that autonomy.

In addition, as stated in Pages 41 and 42 of the SER and confirmed during the site visit, TWAEA puts an emphasis on explaining the rationale of its approach to accreditation to all parties involved. The Association supports TEPs in the preparation phase of reviews by providing handbooks and presentation materials, followed by seminars, discussions, and explanation sessions to enhance TEPs' understanding and to lessen the burden and pressure of preparing relevant documentation. Relevant information on evaluation objectives and goals, as well as

standards and indicators, are also published on TWAEA's website, along with the training provided by experts to guide the TEPs through the requirements for self-assessment and external review processes, including the format and report writing (<https://iqas.twaea.org.tw/download/quality>). These activities support the smooth conduct of reviews, which was confirmed during the site visit by representatives from the TEPs.

This approach is also important in supporting efficiency in all steps of the procedures. Regarding financial costs, the MOE pays for institutional evaluation and subsidizes program evaluation, as outlined in the *Guidelines for Subsidizing Universities and Colleges to Conduct the Quality Assurance of Departments*. As the Review Panel learned during the site visit, MOE subsidizes up to 60% of the program evaluation costs.

The Review Panel is of the opinion that the standards and indicators, especially though their generic design, the emphasis on IQA, and the opportunity to add indicators clearly support and require the TEPs to accept and execute their primary responsibility for the quality and the relevance of their provision. This approach is a cornerstone of TWAEA's review procedures at the program level and especially at the institutional level.

Furthermore, it is evident that the standards promote accountability, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and social responsibility. However, the Review Panel suggests that academic freedom is addressed more explicitly at the level of indicators.

The Review Panel commends TWAEA for the effective support it provides to TEPs, which is clearly appreciated.

2.2 The EQAP's standards for external quality review

The standards value diversity of provisions and promote trust, relevance, enhanced quality of TE provisions, and thus promote a quality culture.

The standards and indicators TWAEA uses in its accreditation procedures cover a broad range of relevant topics which are to be expected at institutional and at program levels, namely:

- At institutional level: *Indicators for Institutional Evaluation of Technological Institutions*. These include four items (Academic Governance and Development Strategies, Ensuring and Supporting Teacher's Teaching Quality, Ensuring and Enhancing Student Learning & Quality, Self-improvement and Advancement) which are supported by core indicators, checklist content, and explanations.

- At program level: *Standards and Indicators for the Higher Education Quality Certification* (HEQC) project. These include four standards (Mission & Development, Teaching & Learning, Academic Performance & Improvement Strategies and Self-improvement & Sustainable Management), which are supported by the core indicators, assessment foci, and a glossary of terms.

The indicators for institutional evaluation require the tertiary education providers (TEPs) to define their aims and objectives including indicators (Standard 1), and to translate these aims and objectives into the areas of operations addressed in Standards 2 and 3 (Ensuring and Supporting Teacher's Teaching Quality & Ensuring and Enhancing Student Learning Quality), whereas Standard 4 requires the TEP to implement a sustainable internal quality assurance (IQA) system.

The standards and indicators for program evaluation follow a similar structure; especially in Standards 3 and 4 which explicitly require TEPs to implement improvement strategies and a sustainable IQA system.

Common to both sets of standards is the inbuilt ADRI (Approach, Deployment, Results, Improvement) approach, which requires the tertiary education providers (TEPs) to implement an effective internal follow-up mechanism on the outcomes of internal and external reviews by tracking their progress. The design of standards and indicators is supported by the follow-up on TWAEA's external reviews, which evaluates the implementation of the reviewers' recommendations one year after the review. During the site visit, the Review Panel learned that the 'spiral upward' mechanism of self-growth, emphasizing self-improvement (SER, Page 47) is considered a key feature of TWAEA's approach by all parties involved.

When developing its current standards, indicators and procedures, TWAEA involved various stakeholders in the process. Questionnaire surveys were distributed, and post-evaluation seminars were conducted to solicit opinions and suggestions from reviewers and the evaluated TEPs. Experts and scholars were invited to review the design of evaluation standards and indicators. Furthermore, discussion fora ('public hearings') were held to gather suggestions from other experts and stakeholders. The whole process resulted in deliberations and final decision by the Institutional Evaluation Steering Committee.

The standards and indicators come with an explanation of the elements and supporting data, which is available on TWAEA's website. Training and workshops are also provided to further aid understanding of TEPs, along with the format of self-assessment reports.

Analysis

TWAEA's design of standard and indicators, as mentioned under Criterion 2.1, follows the principle of de-standardization. One characteristic of the standards and indicators that was mentioned in the previous chapter is also relevant here, namely the generic level of the standards. This design makes the indicators applicable to institutions that differ in terms of size, profile, etc. TWAEA's accreditation activities are limited to technical and vocational TEPs, which reduces the diversity of providers, at least as far as the disciplinary profile is concerned. Nonetheless, refraining from detailed and prescriptive indication, together with the additional indicators, makes it much easier to evaluate institutions against general objectives and against their own objectives.

It is to be emphasized that the standards and indicators are not specifically designed to evaluate technical and vocational TEPs; instead, these could be applied to all types of TEPs irrespective of the disciplinary profile. The Review Panel wishes to commend TWAEA for this approach, which lowers the risk of stifling innovation by focusing on the institutional aims and objectives. Furthermore, the Review Panel is of the opinion that the design of the standard and the process does not only support accountability but especially the enhancement of provision through IQA. The Review Panel concludes that the standards and indicators include all relevant aspects regarding governance, organization, learning and teaching, related research, resources, and quality assurance. However, academic integrity and equitable access lack explicitness although addressed in the reviews.

2.3 The EQAP's external review process

The external review framework has a clear set of procedures for each type of review.

TWAEA conducts its two accreditation procedures based on formally approved methodologies, namely:

- Regulations on the Procedures for Institutional Evaluation of Technological Institutions (2010, updated in 2020)
- Regulations on Conducting Follow-up Evaluation and Re-evaluation for Institutional Evaluation of Technological Institutions (2010, updated in 2020)
- Higher Education Quality certification (HEQC) (2022).

These documents are supported by regulations for core aspects of the procedures, such as:

- Regulations on the Appointment of Reviewers for Institutional Evaluation of Technological Institutions (2020)
- Ethical Guidelines for Reviewers (2020)
- Regulations on the Confirmation of Evaluation Report for Institutional Evaluation of Technological Institutions (2020).

All these documents are published on the TWAEA's website. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the standards and indicators are also pre-defined and published.

The procedures follow a three-stage-model including:

- Preparation Stage: Selection and training of review team
- Review Stage: Submission of self-evaluation report, document review, site-visit, review report
- Follow-up Stage: Confirmation of review report, approval and publication of review results (in case of need, the appeals procedure).

It is to be noted that, further to what is called 'Follow-up Stage', TWAEA also applies a follow-up to the entire review by requiring the tertiary education providers (TEPs) to submit a follow-up report on the implementation of recommendations and on recent developments one year after the original review had taken place. The follow-up report must demonstrate how the institutions addressed the recommendations to overcome any quality issues. All these procedures follow the regulations mentioned above and/or in the Standard Operation Procedures.

In addition to the regulations, TWAEA also uses handbooks that inform all parties involved in detail about the regulations, standards, indicators and the relevant expectations. However, the Review Panel was not able to access these handbooks easily on the website and encourages TWAEA to publish them more clearly.

TWAEA does not provide specific regulations for reviews conducted fully online. Online reviews were conducted during the pandemic, such as during the evaluation of the Macau University of Science and Technology's programs but TWAEA found online site-visits less favourable than face-to-face operations, as the Review Panel learned during the site visit. Although online reviews might be a topic for the future, TWAEA has currently no concrete intention to change its policy.

The following paragraphs highlight some core features of the procedures:

Experts: Selection and Training

Peer review is a core element of external quality assurance (EQA) according to international good practice. TWAEA has at hand a database of 3,500 reviewers covering representation from

academia, industry, and government. The selection follows the *Regulations on the Appointment of Reviewers for Institutional Evaluation of Technological Institutions*. The review panel heard that the same principles apply but saw no explicit regulations governing programme reviews in this regard. During the site visit, the Review Panel learned about the details of the selection process. Reviewers are selected based on the match between their qualifications and the field evaluated. For every review case, an external expert together with a member of the relevant Approval review Committee is requested to compile a long list of suitable reviewers. Based on the long list, the Steering Committee agrees on a shorter list, which is then presented to the TEP for clarification of any cases of conflicts of interest or bias. It is worth noting that the right to recuse potential reviewers is limited to program accreditation (SD2) where this step is not applied in institutional accreditation procedures.

After this, the panel is composed by the secretariat, based on availability. Following the *Ethical Guidelines for Reviewers* (SD6), reviewers have to sign the Agreement on Reviewer's Ethics and Recusal and Personal Data Consent Form to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure the fairness and impartiality of the evaluation process. The guidelines cover, among others, the disqualification grounds for an appointment, training requirements, and upholding professionalism.

Reviewers must attend compulsory training activities that follow the *Reviewers Training Framework* that includes basic courses and advanced courses about the standard and indicators, as well as the various procedural steps .

Consistency

HEIs are provided with the opportunity to correct factual errors and/or provide clarifications on draft evaluation reports. The *Regulations on the Confirmation of Evaluation Report for Institutional Evaluation of Technological Institutions* (SD09) state that HEIs are given 14 days after receiving the draft evaluation reports to remedy any factual errors due to the violation of procedures or discrepancies of content. After receipt of such comments, TWAEA will convene a meeting within 30 days of the deadline to reach a decision.

TWAEA has set a timeline of 8 to 12 months to accomplish all three stages of evaluation. The preparation stage takes around 3 to 4 months, the review stage about 2 to 3 months, and the follow-up stage between 3 to 5 months.

Information on the external review processes (including standards and indicators) and procedures is made available on TWAEA's website, through manuals and training materials, and the project co-ordinator assigned.

Analysis

The Review Panel came to the conclusion that the methodology is well-developed and generally conforms to agreed international good practice. The various procedural steps will also be addressed more in detail under Standard 3.

During the site visit, the interviewees confirmed the relevance and effectiveness of reviewer training, including the training material, and highlighted the effectiveness of involving experienced reviewers in the training seminars. TWAEA uses a performance tracking mechanism to assess reviewers' performance. Reviewers who perform well will be re-appointed and invited to share good practices with other reviewers. During the site visit, reviewers said they appreciated the opportunity to give feedback on training and which is taken on board to further improve training sessions.

The Review Panel wishes to highlight the care that is taken of the reviewers. The processes of selecting and training reviewers are sound and comprehensive as confirmed by the positive feedback from the interviewees. The training is one means to assure consistent evaluation and decision-making. Procedures for ensuring consistency includes all steps and instruments and follows internationally agreed good practice. The panel commends TWAEA for the huge emphasis which is put on ensuring consistency.

During the site visit, the support and professionalism of TWAEA staff that support reviews was highly appreciated by the reviewers. However, the Review Panel noted TWAEA's comment in the SER that identifying independent reviewers could be challenging due to Taiwan's geographical limitations and encourages the Association to consider how it might overcome this challenge.

The Review Panel noted two aspects of TWAEA's framework for the external review of the quality of TEPs that are not in line with international good practice: (i) the fact that students are not involved as panel members which will be addressed more in detail under Standard 6; and (ii) The Review Panel did not find reasonable grounds to refuse the right to recuse panel members to program accreditation procedures. Reasons for recusal such as impartiality might also occur in reviews at institutional level.

The Review Panel suggests that preparing for online reviews will help the agency to face any future external influences such as COVID-19 and prevent interruption to face-to-face activities in the future.

The Review Panel wishes to highlight as good practice that, from the outset, the standards and indicators for institutional evaluation are valid only for one cycle of institutional review, and that they are reconsidered at the end of the cycle by taking into consideration feedback gathered from parties involved in reviews and new developments in higher education and in the society at large. This approach guarantees up-to-date standards that are relevant and applicable.

2.4 Regular systemic reviews

The EQAP conducts regular systemic/thematic reviews to inform its stakeholders and public at large on systemic issues/developments, and trends.

TWAEA produces various analytical reports and in the past years has published reports in the following categories:

Analysis of outcomes of the agency's evaluation activities:

- At the time of the site visit, TWAEA was preparing an analysis of the outcomes of the evaluation activities, which includes the processes and a comprehensive analysis of the evaluation results.

Also relevant in this context are:

- *'Analysis of the Terms Used in the Evaluation of Technical and Vocational Institutions'* (2022), which provides information about institutional quality assurance systems and related terminology to inform tertiary education providers (TEPs), reviewers, and TWAEA's work.
- *'Evaluation Glossary on Taiwan's Vocational Higher Education'* in 2015, with articles to disseminate TWAEA's evaluation concepts across society.

The analytical work goes beyond analysing the Association's own evaluation activities and covers international developments to inform the development of quality assurance (QA) in Taiwan.

Analysis of international trends:

- *'International Higher Education Evaluation Systems'* (series of publications between 2007 and 2009), which provide information on quality assurance systems and current trends from ten countries (Japan, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Australia, and the United States).
- *Management Education, and Glossary of Assessment and Evaluation of Higher Technical and Vocational Education in the Republic of China in 2022.*

Furthermore, TWAEA's analytical work goes beyond QA in the narrow sense and addresses current topics in higher education, such as:

- A book series on institutional research since 2016 through the Taiwan Institutional Research Cooperation (TIRC) (Leap from IR 1.0 to 2.0, IR Practice Strategy, University IR: Information and Analysis of Institutional Policy, Critical IR Code: Practice of Institutional Operations – Universities, Critical IR Code: Practice of Institutional Operations – Technical and Vocational Education).
- A report *'How to Make Our Learning Closer to the Industry: Summary of Optimization of the Implementation Environment in Technological and Vocational Colleges'* in 2021, which was based on a project commissioned by the Ministry of Education (MOE).
- *'Survey on the Promotion of SDGs in Higher Education Institutions'* in 2023 with participation of 119 TEPs.
- *Cross-Region Report on Students' Learning Outcomes and Satisfaction* in 2023.

All reports can be assessed through the website.

In addition, TWAEA also signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) and the Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan (IEET) to collaborate on the publications of *'Evaluation Bimonthly'* beginning in 2014 (see criterion 4.2) . The publications provide a venue for domestic higher education evaluation and accreditation agencies to share their ideas, opinions, and report on evaluation matters; (<https://www.twaea.org.tw/m/403-1772-188-1.php?Lang=en>).

Analysis

During the site visit, the Review Panel learned that stakeholders were very appreciative of TWAEA's analytical work and even asked for more activities related to the outcomes of the evaluations. At the same time, however, the interviews revealed that not all stakeholders were aware of these kinds of reports.

The Review Panel came to the conclusion that TWAEA plays an important role as a center of expertise in QA in technical and vocational education, which goes beyond analysis of outcomes in a narrow sense but also covers relevant questions of current trends and challenges. The Review Panel wishes to congratulate TWAEA on the stakeholders' appreciation of the Association in this regard. At the same time, the Review Panel concluded that a closer alignment of TWAEA's analytical work with a revised strategic plan, that is translated into a workplan for

such reports, would greatly benefit the Association's work with potential to impact on the review of its procedures.

2.5 Commendations

- The Review panel commends TWAEA for the generic design of the core indicators that supports the TEPs the autonomy to design the internal processes, instruments, and systems that suit them best.
- The Review Panel commends the fact that the standards and indicators for institutional evaluation are valid only for one cycle of institutional review, and that they are reconsidered at the end of the cycle by taking into consideration feedback gathered from parties involved in reviews and also taking into consideration new developments in higher education and the society at large.
- The Review Panel commends TWAEA for supporting tertiary education providers in building an internal quality assurance system and for respecting their identity and integrity.
- The Review Panel commends TWAEA for providing extensive and frequent training to its stakeholders, which facilitates consistency in outcomes.
- The Review Panel commends TWAEA for its extensive reviewer database. During an interview, the Executive Director of the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) confirmed this as TWAEA's distinctive strength during an interview.
- The Review Panel commends TWAEA for the creation of the TWAEA Institutional Research Cooperation (TIRC) that strengthens its primary purpose of contributing to the continuous improvement of the quality of the tertiary education providers. The website containing the vocabulary developed for the benefit of different stakeholders also deserves commendation.

II.6 Suggestions

- The Review Panel suggests that equitable access and academic integrity be considered in the indicators more explicitly.
- The Review Panel suggests that TWAEA publish the best practices identified from the evaluated tertiary education providers to provide guidance, motivation, and learning opportunities for others.

- The Review Panel suggests that preparing for online reviews will help the Association to face any future external influences such as COVID-19 and prevent interruption to face-to-face activities in the future.

II.7 Recommendations

None.

II.8 Conclusion of the Review Panel

In general, the evaluation framework (procedures), standards and indicators, are appropriate and in line with internationally agreed good practice. The Review Panel would like to emphasize as good practice that the framework is valid only for one cycle and is reviewed at the end of each cycle.

III. The EQAP's Review of TE Providers: Evaluation, Decision Making and Appeals

3.1 Evaluation

The evaluation conducted by external panel is based on a clearly articulated and publicly available criteria and methodology.

As mentioned already under Standard 2, TWAEA applies standards and indicators and also a methodology which are published on TWAEA's website and made known to stakeholders through handbooks and seminars (<https://iqas.twaea.org.tw/en>).

The Association uses various instruments to assure consistent application of the regulations, such as:

- The standards and indicators are supplemented by explanatory information and a glossary of terms (see criterion 2.3), which is an important means to assure a common understanding as the basis for consistent application.
- TWAEA's reviewers must attend compulsory training before an evaluation procedure starts.
- TWAEA's reviewers are supported by a project coordinator and an accompanying assistant.

The phase after the site visit is characterized by various steps to assure that the report and especially the assessments are based on a consistent application of the standards and indicators. The reviewers hold a review meeting to discuss the initial report, which is then revised and forms the preliminary report; the preliminary report which is sent to the tertiary education provider (TEP) for checking of factual errors and comments, and consequently for confirmation; the confirmed report is sent to one of the two Approval Review Committees for Quality in Higher Education (one for program-level reviews and one for institutional-level reviews). These committees comprise former reviewers from different backgrounds with review experience who assess the report with regard to compliance with the regulations and correct and consistent application. The committee might request further information from the panel and/or refer the report back to the reviewers if it needs to be revised.

Analysis

During the site visit, the Review Panel learned that all parties involved in a procedure appreciate the clarity of the regulations, the support through training for institutions and reviewers, and

the emphasis that is placed on consistency when drafting the assessment reports. The fact that appeals are very seldomly filed can be taken as indication of a professional, fair, and consistent application of the regulations. In particular, the two Approval Review Committees were reported as major moderators for ensuring consistency.

The Review Panel came to the conclusion that TWAEA's efforts to assure consistency are comprehensive and effective, and that this is a result of the guidance and support provided to all parties involved. The interviews demonstrated that TWAEA has a sound understanding of the potential risks of inconsistency arising from peer reviews and designs its processes to mitigate these risks accordingly. The panel wishes to commend TWAEA for the robust and effective system to ensure consistency.

3.2 Decision-making

The EQAP has policies and procedures in place that ensure fair and independent decision-making on the review cases.

TWAEA, via the two Approval Review Committees, takes the accreditation decisions on the basis of the self-assessment reports and the review report. Efforts to ensure consistency in the application of the standards and indicators continue in the decision-making phase of the reviews. During the site visit, the Review Panel was able to confirm that the members of the committees focus on the comprehensiveness and fairness of the reports and may ask additional questions to the reviewers or even refer the report back if deemed necessary.

All decisions together with the review reports are made public through the TWAEA Higher Education Quality Assurance System's page (<https://iqas.twaea.org.tw/en/announcement>).

Analysis

In line with the evidence presented under 3.2, the panel came to the conclusion that the efforts and processes in place to assure consistency and the thorough analysis of the compliance of the procedures and assessment reports ensure fair and correct decision-making and outcomes.

3.3 Appeals and complaints

The EQAP deploys clear policies and procedures for appeals and complaints.

TWAEA provides *Guidelines for Handling Appeals in the Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions* and uses these to manage any appeals (SD8). Tertiary education providers (TEPs) wishing to appeal against a decision must fill in an appeal application form within one month of receiving the evaluation report and its outcomes and pay a fee of NTD60,000. TWAEA will form an Appeals Committee (called 'Higher Education Institutions Evaluation Appeals Evaluation Committee'), with nine to eleven members, subject to approval by the Board of Directors. The Committee is made up of members who are not affiliated with the TEP in question and do not serve on the relevant Approval Review Committee. A report will be produced and forwarded to the TEP concerned and the Ministry of Education (MOE) for information.

Analysis

During the site visit, the Review Panel learned that TEPs are aware of the appeals process. Institutional representatives and others also confirmed that there is generally only one such case per year.

In addition to this appeal procedure, the public can also file complaints through a variety of methods such as e-mail, telephone, letter or online. However, the Review Panel noted that these details are not published on TWAEA's website.

The Review Panel came to the conclusion that TWAEA has a well-designed and robust appeals procedure. Although little tested in practice, the Review Panel is confident that its clarity and robustness provides for fair implementation.

3.4 Commendations

- The Review Panel wishes to commend TWAEA for the robust and effective system to ensure consistency.

III.5 Suggestions

- The Review Panel suggests that TWAEA adds information to its website about the opportunities for the wider public to file complaints.

III.6 Recommendations

None.

III.7 Conclusion of the Review Panel

Generally, the implementation of the accreditation procedures is very professional. The Review Panel wishes to highlight especially the training activities and the process is to assure consistent decision making.

However, due to the fact that there are very few complaints or appeals, there is not a great deal of evidence to support the smooth operation of the process; nonetheless, the Review Panel was convinced that, should such an occasion arise, the processes in place would allow TWAEA to deal effectively with a complaint or an appeal.

IV. Internationalization and External Relations

4.1 Internationalization

The EQAP has a robust internationalization strategy that leads to enhanced effectiveness and efficiency in its operations.

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and the additional evidence provided the Review Panel with information on TWAEA's current approach to internationalization. At the highest strategic level, internationalization feeds into the overarching strategic goal of 'Toward an Outstanding Evaluation Agency with Credibility.' In particular, the second strategic goal of 'insightful perspective', relates to 'internationalized improvement' and 'internationalization for evaluation certification'. With these overarching goals in mind, the Association has developed an international strategy which sets out four areas of activity: (1) international accreditation; (2) international visit and exchange; (3) international seminars; and (4) international study tour. Relevant information is provided on the TWAEA International Pilot Platform's page (<https://ipp.twaea.org.tw/en>). Each area of strategic activity is reinforced with collaborative activities (see below).

In response to the Ministry of Education's (MOE) policies promoting the internationalization of higher education, TWAEA says that it is open to international developments in higher education quality assurance (QA) to enhance Taiwan universities' quality and boost their international competitiveness. Its capacity for internationalization is evidenced through its staff diversity and expertise, its desire for professional development through international conferences or seminars, hosting of international seminars and workshops for tertiary education providers (TEPs) and reviewers, conduct of meta-evaluation by international experts, recognition by international bodies, research, and international accreditation and cooperation projects. Based on the information provided on the TWAEA International Pilot Platform's page (<https://ipp.twaea.org.tw/en>), it is evident that TWAEA actively hosts or is a recipient of many international activities.

TWAEA has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with nine QA agencies and works as collaboratively with them on various projects such as the development of International Joint Accreditation Standards (IJAS) with the Japan Universities Accreditation Association (JUAA), Thailand's Office for National Education Standards and Quality (ONESQA), and the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA); and an international survey

project on students' learning outcomes and satisfaction conducted jointly with ONESQA, JUAA, The Centre for Education Accreditation, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (CEA VNU-HCM) and the Mongolian National Council for Education Accreditation (MNCEA).

In 2019, TWAEA collaborated with JUAA to accredit Chia Nan University of Pharmacy and Science (Taiwan) and Akita International University (Japan) through the International Joint Accreditation Standards (iJAS) project. TWAEA has also hosted and participated in the international staff exchange program involving JUAA and ONESQA to enable staff to share relevant experiences, stay current with global trends of evaluation, strengthen the understanding of QA systems, and further enhance professional knowledge and skills regarding international accreditation. Since 2018, TWAEA, JUAA, and ONESQA have taken turns hosting this inter-agency internship program. TWAEA also hosted the first international internship program in 2023, which was held online over four days and physically (face-to-face) for five days.

The Tertiary Education Services Office of the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) has also entrusted TWAEA with conducting a pilot project of higher education evaluation to review the City University of Macau in 2018 and, later, the accreditation of the Macau University of Science and Technology's programs in 2022. In the same year, TWAEA collaborated with the Songklanakarin Thai Language Center, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand, to launch the Thai Language Proficiency Test in Taiwan.

Analysis

Throughout the site visit, the Review Panel heard that TWAEA's approach to internationalization was two-fold: to learn through its involvement in international fora and activities and to promote the Taiwanese higher education (HE) sector internationally. These aims were appreciated by all internal and external stakeholders that the Review Panel spoke to, and examples of impact were provided. In the view of the Review Panel, the current international strategy is less ambitious than the level of ongoing projects and should include a goal that underlines the importance of the impact of such work.

The Review Panel held an informative and dynamic interview with TWAEA's international partners, including representatives of five of the nine QA agencies with which the Association has signed an MoU. These partners provided information on their joint activities with TWAEA that left the Review Panel in no doubt that these MoUs represent active partnerships rather than merely a document on a shelf. The agencies discussed the strategic reasons for their

partnership which ranged from mutual learning about each other's regions to initiatives such as the development of the International Joint Accreditation Standards (IJAS) project. This latter, in particular along with mention of a joint QA framework, led to a discussion about the future impact of such standards on the development of transnational education both in the region and further afield. Partners were keen to stress the benefits of such joint working relationships in order to demonstrate flexibility in dealing with the requirements and regulations of other countries. Mutual recognition of qualifications was also mentioned as a future area of work. These examples, in particular, have potential to be of significant regional value in the view of the Review Panel, and TWAEA is encouraged to maintain momentum in such projects with its international partners.

It was also clear to the Review Panel that partners engage in reciprocal learning with TWAEA and examples such as the Association's website, reviewer training, and integration of technology into evaluation systems were cited as learning points.

Reciprocal learning was also evidenced in the appreciation of staff exchanges. This was also evidenced in discussions with TWAEA staff with whom the Review Panel spoke to - all had attended an exchange as part of a well-embedded program between JUUA, ONESQA, and TWAEA, which were not disrupted by the pandemic, but which continued online during this period. Vietnamese representatives at the meeting expressed their desire to participate in these exchanges.

It was evident to the Review Panel that the partners engage in discussion regularly enough and in sufficient depth for them to share views on improvements that each could make. In the case of TWAEA, two key suggestions were made during the interview by the international partners:

a) That the Association consider making its evaluation reports (or summaries of them) available in English. Partners believe that, in a global world, it would be valuable in attracting international students to study in Taiwan and also have benefits in terms of providing information about the national HE system and its QA, thus, ultimately, encouraging mutual recognition.

b) That TWAEA considers how it might involve students more in its operations.

The Review Panel concurs with both of these suggestions (see section 6 for further details on student involvement).

4.2 External Relations

The EQAP effectively promotes its collaborations with key players in national, regional, international contexts.

In addition to the MoUs with nine international quality assurance (QA) agencies, the Association also collaborates with two domestic agencies: Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) and the Institute of Engineering Education Taiwan (IEET) on the publications of 'Evaluation Bimonthly' starting in 2014 (the 48th issue) (see criterion 2.4). It also collaborates with the Association of National Universities of Science and Technology of Taiwan (U-Tech) and the Association of Private Universities and Colleges of Technology of Taiwan (APUCT).

In relation to promoting its mission, TWAEA makes frequent contributions to the 'INQAAHE Bulletin' and the 'APQNews' and has organized workshops for tertiary education providers (TEPs) and reviewers by inviting speakers from Australia, Japan, and the United States to share their expertise on topics such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the use of artificial intelligence. TWAEA has also hosted an international webinar with JUA and ONESQA on SDGs; organized international study tours for TEPs to Japan and the United States (<https://ipp.twaea.org.tw/en/interaction/Study%20Tour>); invited international observers to participate in its evaluation process and participated and spoken at various international conferences or seminars.

Analysis

The Review Panel spoke to representatives of the four national bodies (HEEACT, IEET, U-Tech, and APUCT) and was informed of the positive regard in which TWAEA is held. In particular, the other national QA agencies recognised the strong, well-networked leadership; the professionalism of the Association's staff and of the training program that they undertake. They also mentioned the very good pool of well-trained reviewers on which TWAEA can draw.

There appeared to be slightly less interaction between the Association and the higher education (HE) representative bodies who told the Review Panel that most relevant communication is between the individual TEPs and TWAEA rather than between the Associations and TWAEA. However, the representative bodies act as a conduit for information from TWAEA to members and vice-versa, and there is a quarterly meeting of the members at which feedback is gathered

to pass on to TWAEA. There was no evidence that the current arrangements are lacking in any way.

The evidence provided to the Review Panel demonstrated that TWAEA's efforts to promote the internationalization of evaluation systems has yielded positive results. In 2019, the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of India published the iJAS project's results in a book titled '*Good Practices of External Quality Assurance Agencies Across the Globe*'. In 2021, the Centre for Evaluation of Saarland University, Germany, invited TWAEA to contribute a book chapter on '*Evaluation in Taiwan*'. The association was also awarded the 'Quality Award for International Co-operation in Quality Assurance' by APQN in 2014.

4.3 Commendations

- The Review Panel commends TWAEA for its significant contributions to regional and international QA initiatives and activities that have potential to be of significant regional value.
- The Review Panel commends TWAEA for the success of TWAEA's efforts to promote its work internationally.

IV.4 Suggestions

- Given the potential impact of some of TWAEA's work with its international partners, the Review Panel suggests that the Association's international strategy could include the concept of 'impact' as one of its goals.
- The Review Panel suggests that TWAEA considers publishing at least summaries of its evaluation reports in English.

IV.5 Recommendations

None.

IV.6 Conclusion of the Review Panel

In the view of the Review Panel, TWAEA's international activities are one of its key strengths. In particular since there is real potential for impact at regional and national levels and also because the Association remembers to bring its international learning back to benefit its own higher education (HE) sector. Thus, the two aims of internationalization, which are learning

from foreign partners and promoting Taiwanese HE, are clearly visible and are highly appreciated by stakeholders. It is clear that TWAEA is well-regarded by its international partners (and more broadly across the international sphere) and is appreciated in Taiwan by the tertiary education providers (TEPs) for the insights and opportunities it brings to them through its international work.

V. Integrity, Disclosure and Transparency

5.1 Integrity

The EQAP operates with integrity and professionalism and adheres to ethical and professional standard.

TWAEA has policies and procedures in place to ensure integrity in its functions, including its governance, provisions to guard against conflicts of interest, its ethical guidelines and its processes for reviewer selection, recusal, and confidentiality (see criteria 1.1, 2.3, and 3.3). Processes are also in place in relation to data protection and all evaluation outcomes are made public. (see criteria 3.2 and 3.3).

According to the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), all participants involved in evaluations are required to sign a 'Confidentiality Obligation Agreement', and third-parties are required to sign a 'Security Agreement' to prevent confidential information from being disclosed. In addition, All TWAEA's staff have integrity insurance, whereby if an act of dishonesty by an employee causes losses to TWAEA, the Association can claim compensation.

Analysis

In the view of the Review Panel, TWAEA has policies and procedures in place to ensure integrity in its functions, and the Association operates openly and transparently. This is evident in its governance, conflicts of interest provision and ethical guidelines, reviewer selection process, recusal, and confidentiality obligations, data protection, and public evaluation outcomes.

Communication channels are established for stakeholders to provide feedback on integrity issues; these include appeals and complaints (see criterion 3.3) and post-evaluation surveys (see criterion 2.2). Specifically, during an interview, the Board Chairman and Secretariat indicated that its website and telephone calls are the only means for students to file a complaint or appeal. As mentioned under Standard 3, these opportunities are not presented on the website.

5.2 Disclosure

The EQAP ensures disclosure at different levels of its activity in line with the culture within which operates.

TWAEA is transparent in disclosing its evaluation standards, processes, and outcomes (see criteria 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, and 3.2). It also considers local and regional cultures, the former is shown in the flexibility given to tertiary education providers (TEPs) to adapt TWAEA's standards to their unique characteristics, attributes, identity, and mission (see criteria 2.1). On the latter, the standards adopted in the International Joint Accreditation Standards (IJAS) project are also mentioned on its website under the TWAEA International Pilot Platform's page (<https://ipp.twaea.org.tw/en>). The Association's website also highlights the press releases and newsletters (i.e., Evaluation Bimonthly and ePaper) used by the Association to disseminate information and updates to the public.

5.3 Transparency

The EQAP has robust systems in place to ensure transparent and trustworthy operations.

TWAEA is transparent in disclosing its evaluation standards, processes, outcomes, decision-making, and appeals (see criteria 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3).

It has a robust information management system based on its Information Security Operations Framework. According to the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), in 2019 TWAEA established the *Information Security Management Guidelines and the Personal Data Protection Guidelines*, in which practices are regularly reviewed by strictly adhering to the relevant provisions of the Cybersecurity Management Act and the Personal Data Protection Act. Physical environment security is emphasized through various measures, such as regular fire safety inspections, installation of CCTV, daily data backups, and annual information security and personal data protection training provided to all TWAEA's staff. Data confidentiality and security are also emphasized through the login management feature developed. The information security features for each project are inspected once every quarter by the commissioned information security service providers. There is also a comprehensive evaluation management system in place to track the progress of every tertiary education provider (TEP).

A Reviewer App system has been developed in-house to assist reviewers in conducting evaluations and providing opinions electronically by scanning the QR codes developed.

Analysis

In the view of the Review Panel, the Reviewer App system, which was demonstrated by TWAEA during the site visit, was very useful to the Association's reviewers in carrying out their tasks.

The App has a back-end system, which allows the Association to track the progress of each reviewer's reports and subsequently, the reviewer's consolidated reports, which was demonstrated to the Review Panel during the site visit. The Review Panel believes that such an App enables the Association to fulfil its timeline set to accomplish all three stages of evaluation (see criterion 2.3). The Review Panel would like to commend TWAEA for the initiative taken. However, given the richness of data available from accreditation, and given that TWAEA's primary purpose of contributing to the continuous improvements of the TEPs' quality, an extension to its system to embed data analytics should be possible. This would enable the Association to improve the efficiency of its processes. It is also possible that the outcomes from the analysis conducted on the data be used to inform the TEPs on the quality assurance (QA) areas most lacking, which can be addressed through enhancing the existing training and capacity building programs. This is very much in line with the risk-based approach that many international QA agencies are taking, i.e., focusing on improving areas that are critical to the TEPs. This, in the Review Panel's view, could also complement the surveys completed by the different stakeholder groups in order to improve project execution (see criterion 6.2).

5.4 Commendations

- The Review Panel commends TWAEA for its comprehensive information and data management and security system, including the development of the Reviewer App to enhance its operational efficiency.

V.6 Suggestions

- The Review Panel suggests that TWAEA develop and implement a decision analytics system that uses information available on its system to improve the efficiency of its processes and results, from which the outcomes can be used to identify and improve training programs for the reviewers and TEPs. This could also feed into TWAEA's strategic plan (see Standard 1).

V.7 Recommendations

None.

V.8 Conclusion of the Review Panel

TWAEA operates with integrity and professionalism and adheres to ethical and professional standards, which reflects the Association's role as a professional evaluation agency. Disclosure

is ensured at different levels of its activities, and that it has systems in place to ensure transparent and trustworthy operations.

VI. Stakeholder role and engagement

6.1 Stakeholder role

The EQAP is clear in the expectations of each stakeholder group.

In the SER, TWAEA provides a comprehensive analysis of its stakeholders, especially their roles (expectations), influence/power (level of impact), communications needs, and engagement strategies. The stakeholders include the government (the MoE), TEPs, faculty members and staff, TWAEA's staff members, students, employers, reviewers, other quality assurance (QA) agencies (domestic and international), the general public and society, and Board members.

Analysis

The Review Panel wishes to commend TWAEA for the in-depth and comprehensive analysis of its stakeholders. At the same time, the Review Panel notes that it became apparent during the site visit that this recent analysis is not communicated well to the stakeholders. Specific roles and potential routes to inform TWAEA's operations were not obvious for stakeholders.

As an international panel, it is important to highlight the minor role currently played by students in TWAEA's governance and processes, despite their being a key stakeholder in higher education. As TWAEA mentions in its analysis, students' influence or power is considered low and their role is described as a recipient rather than an active participant in QA. During the site visit, this description was confirmed. Stakeholders, apart from students, were frank and conveyed their opinion that students were not qualified to play a more active role in QA. However, the Review Panel learned that students were eager to contribute more actively to QA, admitting that this would need a cultural change on the part of other stakeholders and that they themselves would need training.

The Review Panel acknowledges that student participation in QA as equal partners in governance bodies and review panels does not have a tradition in Taiwan. It emphasizes the fact that active student involvement, wherever it is standard nowadays, was a result of a long process and did not, by any means, happen overnight. The Review Panel suggests that TWAEA reconsider the role of students in QA and begins a process of gradually involving them more actively in reviews and in the governance of the Association.

6.2 Stakeholder engagement

The EQAP ensures meaningful and impactful stakeholder engagement in its functions.

At the core of engaging stakeholders is their representation in the various governance bodies. In TWAEA's case, this consists mainly of experts from academia with less involvement from industry. Students are not involved in TWAEA's governance.

TWAEA engages different stakeholder groups by providing information, training, and workshops and soliciting input from them through various communication channels. Expert Advisory Panels consisting of experts and scholars from various domains and sectors are consulted on each evaluation project. Stakeholders are also consulted through opinion surveys to help TWAEA make evidence-informed policy and management decisions. TEPs are engaged through forums and post-evaluation seminars to obtain their input. TWAEA also conducts satisfaction surveys with reviewers and on the process so that evaluated TEPs provide feedback on the execution of the evaluation process. The resulting recommendations are compiled for future reference in project execution.

Training is provided to TEPs, reviewers, and TWAEA's staff with the main objective of enhancing their understanding of evaluation work and reducing the pressure or burden. Seminars and workshops are also held for the TEPs and reviewers to exchange information, share issues, aid them in acquiring new evaluation knowledge and disseminate the most recent development trends domestically and abroad.

Feedback obtained from different stakeholders and different sources is collated, analysed, and combined into project outcome reports for future improvements in accordance with ISO requirements. TWAEA staff members are provided with comprehensive induction, training, and professional development on stakeholder involvement and engagement.

Analysis

During the site visit, the Review Panel learned that engagement with stakeholders as far as review processes are concerned is very close and effective. All parties involved appreciated close collaboration, guidance, and opportunities to give feedback.

Currently TWAEA is good at informing stakeholders, not least through the 'ePaper' (see criterion 2.4 for detail). However, it became apparent to the Review Panel that beyond actual reviews, the collaboration is rather loose and not very strategic.

The Review Panel is of the opinion that in general TWAEA would benefit from closer and regular discussion with stakeholders about current and future trends relevant for education and about TWAEA's approaches and methodologies. The various publications of TWAEA as mentioned in chapter 2.4 might well be used to not only present the outcomes of the analytical work to the public but to discuss them with stakeholders with a view to inform TWAEA's strategies and policies.

6.3 Commendations

- The Review Panel commends TWAEA for the comprehensive analysis of role, position, and needs of stakeholders in higher education.

VI.4 Suggestions

- The Review Panel suggests that TWAEA devise a plan to include students and graduates as part of its stakeholder engagement strategy.

VI.5 Recommendations

None.

VI.6 Conclusion of the Review Panel

Whilst commending TWAEA for the comprehensive analysis of role, position, and needs of stakeholders in higher education provided in the SER, the Review Panel encourages TWAEA to take the next step and discuss what role the stakeholders could play directly in its governance and operations to maximise the impact of their experience on the work of TWAEA.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE REVIEW PANEL

From the evidence gathered in this evaluation, it emerges that TWAEA’s compliance with the INQAAHE International Standards and Guidelines (ISGs) is confirmed, with one substantial and five fully compliant judgements (see the summary table below); therefore, the Review Panel recommends to the INQAAHE Board of Directors to grant TWAEA’s compliance with the ISGs.

Summary Table: Assessment of Compliance with INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice (ISG)				
ISGS	Not Compliant	Partially Compliant	Substantial Compliant	Fully Compliant
(1) Legitimacy of the external quality assurance provider			X	
(2) The EQAP’s framework for external review of quality of Tertiary Education Providers (TEPs)				X
(3) The EQAP’s review of TEPs: evaluation, decision making and appeals				X
(4) Internationalization and external relations				X
(5) Integrity, disclosure and transparency				X
(6) Stakeholder role and engagement				X

ANNEX 1. INQAAHE GUIDELINES OF GOOD PRACTICE (ISG)

Table 1 contains baseline standards and guidelines for EQAPs. This section is mandatory for all applicants for international recognition utilizing the ISGs.

Module 1: Baseline standards

Standards		Guidelines	
1	Legitimacy of the External Quality Assurance Provider (EQAP)	1.1 Mission, Governance & Organization: The EQAP is a recognized, credible organization, trusted by key stakeholders: the government, TE providers (TEPs) and public at large. Its governance, structure and operations enable effective and efficient operations in line with its mission.	1.1.1 The EQAP has an established legal basis and is recognized by key stakeholders: government, TE providers and the public at large. The EQAP is guided by principles of good practice in formulating its policies and practices (e.g. independence, objectivity, autonomy).
			1.1.2 The EQAP has a clearly articulated mission statement and a set of objectives that explicitly state that the external quality assurance of tertiary education is a key function of the organization, describe the purpose and scope of its activities and can be translated into verifiable policies and measurable performance indicators. The interest of students and society are at the forefront of its aspirations.
			1.1.3 The EQAP has a well-articulated governance model consistent with its mission and objectives and adequate mechanisms to involve relevant stakeholders at pertinent levels of governance and management.

1.1.4 The composition of its decision-making body and/or its regulatory framework ensure trust, independence and impartiality in decision-making. A clear policy and adequate mechanisms preventing conflict of interests are in operation and apply to its staff, its decision-making body, and external reviewers.

1.1.5 The EQAP's organizational structure makes it possible to carry out its external review processes effectively and efficiently.

1.1.6 The EQAP's activities are premised on a robust strategic planning. Adequate mechanisms are in place to assess its progress, impact and plans for future developments.

1.2 **Resources:** the EQAP has adequate resources – physical, financial and human - to carry out its mission.

1.2.1 The EQAP is equipped with a well-trained, appropriately qualified staff to enable external evaluation effectively and efficiently in accordance with its mission statement and its methodological approach. The staff has the needed skills to carry out the functions associated with external QA. The EQAP provides systematic opportunities for the professional development of its staff.

1.2.2 The EQAP has established, maintains and enhances a robust pool of qualified external reviewers supported by necessary recruitment, on-boarding, training and professionalization opportunities.

1.2.3 The EQAP has adequate physical, virtual and financial resources to fulfil its goals and carry out the activities that emerge from its mission statement and objectives. Its funding approach instils trust and sustainability in operations. It is equipped with the necessary technological resources to carry out efficiently its processes including a database of external reviewers, a respective platform for managing its evaluation procedures, etc.

1.3 Internal QA and Accountability:

The EQAP has in place policies and mechanisms for its internal quality assurance that demonstrate a continuing effort to maintain and improve the quality and integrity of its activities.

1.3.1 The EQAP has a clear policy for its own internal and external quality assurance linked to organizational planning, funding and performance. Outcomes are evinced through robust accountability measures available to the TE community and the society it serves.

1.3.2 The EQAP has robust internal quality assurance mechanisms that enable it to review its own activities in order to respond to the changing nature of tertiary education, the effectiveness of its operations, and to maintain its relevance and contribution towards the achievement of its objectives.

1.3.3 The EQAP periodically conducts a self-review of its own activities, including consideration of its own effects on the system(s) it operates within and its over-riding values. The review is premised on reliable data collection and analysis to inform decision-making and trigger improvements.

1.3.4 The EQAP’s plan for internal and external evaluation of its policies and practices identifies and integrates its practices in reviewing diverse modalities of delivery (e.g. distance education provision, hybrid) and UNESCO ISCED levels 4-8, as applicable. For example, while assessing postgraduate programs, necessary dimensions, such as research capacity should form the core of evaluation, focused on links between research and learning through an integrated approach to external QA review.

1.3.5 The EQAP is subject to external reviews at regular intervals, ideally not to exceed five years. Evidence of any required action(s) is (are) implemented and disclosed.

1.3.6 Strong evidence exists of a well-established and robust quality culture, which drives enhancement, relevance of and trust in the EQAP. The evidence is present throughout all the functions of the EQAP, as per its mandate.

2 The EQAP’s framework for external review of quality of TEPs

2.1 The relationship between the EQAP and Tertiary Education Providers (TEPs): The EQAP recognizes TEPs as having primary responsibility for quality and

2.1.1 The EQAP recognizes that institutional and programmatic quality and quality assurance are primarily the responsibility of the tertiary education providers themselves and respects the specific feature of each TEP.

2.1.2 The EQAP ensures that the core values of tertiary education - equitable access, accountability, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and social responsibility - are respected and promoted.

relevance and providing support in promoting trust and credibility.

2.1.3 The EQAP promotes development, appropriate implementation, and continuous enhancement of the TE IQA system in accordance with the understanding that the primary responsibility for assuring quality resides with the providers.

2.1.4 The EQAP is mindful of the level of workload and related costs that its procedures will place on TEPs and strives to make the procedures as time and cost effective as possible.

2.1.5 The EQAP provides tertiary education providers with clear guidance on the requirements for self-assessment and external review processes.

2.2 **The EQAP's standards for external quality review:** The standards value diversity of provisions and promote trust, relevance, enhanced quality of TE

2.2.1 The EQAP recognizes and values the diversity of providers and translates this institutional aspect into standards that take into account the TEP's identity and mission.

2.2.2 The standards adopted by the EQAP have been subject to reasonable consultation with stakeholders and are revised at regular intervals to ensure relevance to the needs of the system.

provisions, and thus promote a quality culture.

2.2.3 The standards explicitly address the areas of a TEP’s activity that fall within the EQAP’s scope, (e.g., governance and management, program design and approval, teaching and learning processes, student admission, progression and certification, research, and community engagement) and on the availability of necessary resources (e.g., finances, staff and learning resources).

2.2.4 The standards take into account and provide for an effective internal follow-up on the outcomes of the external reviews.

2.2.5 The EQAP has a clear policy that specifies how standards are to be applied and the types of evidence needed to demonstrate that they are met.

2.2.6 The EQAP standards adequately address and promote academic integrity.

2.3 **The EQAP’s external review process:** the external review framework has a clear set of procedures for each type of review.

2.3.1 The EQAP carries out an external review process that is driven by a publicly available and reliable methodology ensuring independence, trust, relevance to the existing context and credibility of its procedures. Where applicable, the EQAP should demonstrate its capacity to conduct reviews in both virtual and in-person modes supported by purpose-built methodology. This distinction should be clear to avoid any issues of misconduct.

2.3.2 The EQAP has published documents clearly articulating expectations from TEPs in the form of quality standards and procedures for each step/phase of the external review.

2.3.3 The external review process is carried out by a panel(s) of experts consistent with the characteristics of the provider/provision under review. Experts can provide input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students, employers or professional practitioners. Experts represent a balance of diversity, equity, and inclusion as appropriate for the mission of the EQAP.

2.3.4 The EQAP has clear specifications on the characteristics and selection of external reviewers, who must be supported by appropriate training and relevant materials such as guidelines/handbooks and manuals for evaluation.

2.3.5 External review procedures include effective and comprehensive mechanisms for the prevention of conflicts of interest and ensure that any judgment(s) resulting from external reviews are based on explicit and published criteria.

2.3.6 The EQAP's system has mechanisms in place that ensure each TEP or program is evaluated in a consistent way, even if the external panels, teams, or committees differ.

		2.3.7	The EQAP carries out the external review within a reasonable time-frame to ensure that information is current and updated.		
		2.3.8	The EQAP ensures the tertiary education providers have an opportunity to correct any factual error that may appear in the external review report.		
		2.3.9	The EQAP provides clear guidance to the providers in the application of each step within the external review procedure, the solicitation of assessment/feedback from the public, students, and other constituents, or the preparation for external review as necessary and appropriate.		
	2.4	Regular Systemic Reviews: the EQAP conducts regular systemic/thematic reviews to inform its stakeholders and public at large on systemic issues/developments. and trends.	2.4.1	Where applicable, the EQAP conducts regular systemic/thematic reviews within the domain it operates in and makes reports on trends and impacts publicly available for broader use by stakeholders.	
			2.4.2	The EQAP prepares, and periodically disseminates, integrated, system-wide reports on the overall outcomes of QA processes, impacts on the TE system and its performance, and of any other relevant activities.	
3	The EQAP's Review of TE Providers: Evaluation, Decision Making and Appeals	3.1	Evaluation: The evaluation conducted by external panel is based on a clearly articulated and	3.1.1	The evaluation criteria are clearly articulated and supported by a robust methodology.
				3.1.2	The evaluation criteria and methodology are consistently applied across all cases.

publicly available criteria and methodology.

3.1.3 The EQAP provides full and clear disclosure of its policies, procedures, criteria and methodology for evaluation and judgements of TE performance, made publicly available prior to its application.

3.2 **Decision-making:** The EQAP has policies and procedures in place that ensure fair and independent decision-making on the review cases.

3.2.1 EQAP decisions take into consideration the outcomes of both the provider’s internal review process and the external review panel while considering any other relevant information, provided this has been communicated to the provider.

3.2.2 EQAP decisions are based on published standards and procedures and can be justified only with reference to those standards and procedures.

3.2.3 The EQAP decision-making process is impartial, rigorous, and transparent. The approach to decision-making and actions for imposing recommendations for follow-up by TEPs are consistent throughout all procedures.

3.2.4 The EQAP makes its decisions and/or review reports public. The content and extent of reporting accords with the cultural context and applicable legal and other requirements.

3.2.5 The EQAP has mechanisms to facilitate a fair public understanding of the reasons supporting decisions taken.

	<p>3.3 Appeals and Complaints: The EQAP deploys clear policies and procedures for appeals and complaints.</p>	<p>3.3.1 The EQAP has procedures in place to deal in a consistent way with complaints about its procedures or operations.</p> <hr/> <p>3.3.2 The EQAP has clear, published procedures for handling appeals related to its external review and decision-making processes.</p> <hr/> <p>3.3.3 Appeals are conducted by an independent panel/commission not responsible for the original decision and has no conflicts of interest. Appeals need not necessarily be conducted outside the EQAP.</p>
<p>4 Internationalization and External Relations</p>	<p>4.1 Internationalization: The EQAP has a robust internationalization strategy that leads to enhanced effectiveness and efficiency in its operations.</p> <hr/> <p>4.2 External relations: the EQAP effectively promotes its collaborations with key players in national, regional, international</p>	<p>4.1.1 The EQAP abides by an <i>internationalization principle</i> in its functions and operations as applicable and which accord with its mission.</p> <hr/> <p>4.1.2 The EQAP is open to international developments in quality assurance and tertiary education at large and has mechanisms that enable it to learn about and analyze the main trends in the field, thus enhancing relevance.</p> <hr/> <p>4.1.3 The EQAP collaborates with other QA bodies internationally where possible in areas such as exchange of good practices, capacity building, review of decisions, joint projects, and/or staff exchanges.</p> <hr/> <p>4.2.1 The EQAP appropriately coordinates and communicates with other national, regional international government and non-government organizations in the oversight of its provisions.</p>

		contexts.	4.2.2	The EQAP’s external relations, partnerships and collaborations promote its mission and successful implementation of its strategies.
5 Integrity, Disclosure and Transparency	5.1	Integrity: The EQAP operates with integrity and professionalism and adheres to ethical and professional standards.	5.1.1	The EQAP has a clear policy and procedures in place to underpin integrity in its functions and manifests it openly and transparently. Integrity is integral to the culture of the organization and is consistently respected in all the modes of delivery of services (face-to-face; distance; hybrid; cross-border).
	5.2	Disclosure: The EQAP ensures disclosure at different levels of its activity in line with the culture within which operates.	5.2.1	The EQAP’s policies and procedures on external evaluation of tertiary education providers and provisions underpin adequate disclosure of its reviews and related outcomes/decisions made, based on consideration of the local and regional cultures, while ensuring alignment with international best practice.
			5.2.2	The EQAP makes public its policies and decisions and disseminates reports on outcomes of its QA processes. The EQAP publicly discloses decisions about the EQAP resulting from any external review of its own performance.
	5.3	Transparency: The EQAP has robust systems in place to ensure	5.3.1	The EQAP’s policies and procedures on the external evaluation of tertiary education providers and provisions underpin the transparency principle in dealing with reviews and decision-making.

	transparent and trustworthy operations.	5.3.2	The EQAP has a robust information management system, which supports transparent, efficient, data driven and reliable decision-making. The EQAP has a process for data collection and reporting about its review/accreditation activity for all types of modalities and reviews (e.g., online/distance education provisions, cross-border education, short programs) which are consistent and comply with national/governmental requirements.
6 Stakeholder role and engagement	6.1 Stakeholder role: The EQAP is clear in the expectations of each stakeholder group.	6.1.1	The EQAP clearly defines its internal and external stakeholders along with comprehensive statements of expectations and level of impact from each stakeholder group.
	6.2 Stakeholder engagement: The EQAP ensures meaningful and impactful stakeholder engagement in its functions.	6.2.1	The EQAP's policies ensure pro-active stakeholder engagement in matters related to standards, procedures, reviews, and decision-making. The EQAP, where applicable, should demonstrate an inclusive approach to stakeholder engagement, e.g., in its procedures in terms of ensuring gender and geographical balance, and other non-discriminatory policies.
		6.2.2	To ensure meaningful engagement, the EQAP has targeted induction, training and professionalization measures, which are consistently applied and regularly enhanced as needed.

ANNEX 2. COMPOSITION OF THE ISG REVIEW PANEL


INQAAHE ISG Review Panel

Dr Achim Hopbach	Ms Fiona Crozier	Dr Eddy Chong Siong Choy
Chair of the Review Panel	Secretary	QA Expert
Austria	United Kingdom	Malaysia

Report signed by the ISG Review Panel

Date: XX YY 2024

ISG Project Coordinator

	<p>Mr. Dewin Justiniano INQAAHE ISG Project Coordinator</p> <p>Quality Assurance Senior Specialist at ADEK – 42 Abu Dhabi, UAE</p> <p>Honduras</p>
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ANNEX 3. SCHEDULE OF THE SITE VISIT

INQAAHE International Standards & Guidelines (ISGs)

TWAEA's ISGs Review

Site Visit Program-Agenda

Site Visit Dates:

- Monday 8 April 2024 to Wednesday 10 April 2024

Venue:

- TWAEA office – 5F–1, No.3, Nanhai Rd., Zhongzheng District, Taipei City 100231, Taiwan

Pre-visit Preparation: Sunday 7 April 2024		
Time	Activities & Interview Sessions	Participants
16:00-18:00	Clarification Meeting <i>(in-person at the hotel: 4th Floor Meeting Room, Royal Inn Taipei Linsen)</i>	1. Ms. Ying-Li Chou, Assistant Secretary-General 2. Ms. Hui-Ling Lin, International Affairs Division 3. Mr. Jia-Jhou Wu (<i>translator</i>)

Day 1: Monday 8 April 2024		
Time	Activities & Interview Sessions	Participants
8:30–8:45	Transportation from Hotel to TWAEA Office	ISG Review Panel
8:45–9:00	Preparatory Meeting Day 1	ISG Review Panel
9:00–10:15	Session 1: TWAEA Chairman and Secretariat <i>(in-person)</i>	1. Dr. Jimmy C.Y. Yung, Chairman 2. Ms. Shu-Yuan Wu, Secretary-General 3. Ms. Ying-Li Chou, Assistant Secretary-General 4. Ms. Chien Ling Kou, Projects Division 5. Ms. Hui-Ling Lin, International Affairs Division 6. Ms. Jenny Cheng, Administration & Accounting Division
10:15–10:30	Break	ISG Review Panel

Day 1: Monday 8 April 2024		
Time	Activities & Interview Sessions	Participants
10:30–11:15	<p>Session 2:</p> <p>Approval Review Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – Institutional Level</p> <p><i>(in-person)</i></p>	<p>Committee Members</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr. Tsong-Ming Lin, President, Nanhua University 2. Dr. Tzu-Hsiang Ko, President, Lunghwa University of Science and Technology 3. Dr. Wen-Yuan Chen, President, National Chin-Yi University of Technology <p>Committee Coordinator</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ms. Veronica Huang, Business Division
11:15–11:30	Break	ISG Review Panel
11:30–12:00	<p>Office Tour</p> <p>Including demonstration of the evaluation management system</p> <p><i>(in-person)</i></p>	ISG Review Panel & TWAEA Staff
12:00–13:00	Lunch Break	ISG Review Panel
13:00–13:30	ISG Review Panel Internal Meeting	ISG Review Panel
13:30–14:15	<p>Session 3:</p> <p>Approval Review Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – Program Level</p> <p><i>(in-person)</i></p>	<p>Committee Members</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr. Chaur-Shin Yung, Chancellor, Fo Guang University 2. Dr. Kuo-Pao Chang, Visiting Professor, Graduate School of Education, Ming Chuan University 3. Dr. Tsan-Der Chou, Chair Professor, Cheng-Shiu University <p>Committee Coordinator</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ms. Veronica Huang, Business Division
14:15–14:30	Break	ISG Review Panel
14:30–15:30	<p>Session 4:</p> <p>HEIs Representatives</p> <p><i>(in-person)</i></p>	<p>HEIs evaluated by TWAEA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr. Chun-Hsien Kuo, Vice President, National Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology 2. Dr. Hsien-Wen Liao, Vice President, China University of Technology 3. Dr. Jia-Yush Yen, President, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology 4. Dr. Mao-Chuan Huang, President, Asia Eastern University of Science and Technology 5. Dr. Tzu-Hsiang Ko, President, Lunghwa University of Science and Technology 6. Dr. Wen-Yuan Chen, President, National Chin-Yi University of Technology

Day 1: Monday 8 April 2024		
Time	Activities & Interview Sessions	Participants
15:30–15:45	Break	ISG Review Panel
15:45–16:30	Session 5: Students Representatives <i>(in-person)</i>	Students from HEIs 1. Ms. Chin-Feng Yeh, National Yunlin University of Science and Technology 2. Mr. Chobtumsakul Shupphachai, National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism 3. Ms. Yun-Shyue Lee, National Yunlin University of Science and Technology
End of Day 1		

Day 2: Tuesday 9 April 2024		
Time	Activities & Interview Sessions	Participants
8:45–9:00	Transportation from Hotel to TWAEA Office	ISG Review Panel
9:00–9:30	Preparatory Meeting Day 2	ISG Review Panel
9:30–10:00	Session 6: Ministry of Education – Government Representatives <i>(in-person)</i>	Senior Official of MOE 1. Ms. Li-Jiun Hsieh, Director of the Education Quality and Development Division, Department of Technological and Vocational Education
10:00–10:15	Break	ISG Review Panel
10:15–11:00	Session 7: National Partners #1 – QA Agency <i>(in-person)</i>	Higher Education Evaluation & Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) 1. Dr. Kuang-Chao Yu, Executive Director Accreditation Council for Chinese Business Education (ACCBE) 1. Dr. Jacob Y. H. Jou, Executive Director
11:00–11:15	Break	ISG Review Panel
11:15–12:00	Session 8: National Partners #2 –Organizations in Higher Education <i>(hybrid)</i>	Association of National Universities of Science and Technology of Taiwan (U-Tech) 1. Dr. Neng-Shu Yang, Chairman Association of Private Universities and Colleges of Technology of Taiwan (APUCT) 1. Dr. Tao-Ming Cheng, Executive Director
12:00–13:00	Lunch Break	ISG Review Panel
13:00–13:30	ISG Review Panel Internal Meeting	ISG Review Panel

Day 2: Tuesday 9 April 2024

Time	Activities & Interview Sessions	Participants
13:30–14:30	Session 9: Reviewers <i>(in-person)</i>	Reviewers 1. Dr. Chein Tai, Chair Professor, Kun Shan University 2. Dr. Chia C. Pao, Chair Professor and President Emeritus, Chang Gung University 3. Dr. Dong-Sing Wu, President, National Chi Nan University 4. Dr. Fang Chang, Former Deputy Minister of Finance, Ministry of Finance 5. Dr. Kuang-Hway Yih, Chair Professor, Hungkuang University 6. Dr. Mike Guu, President, I-Shou University 7. Dr. Tien-Rein Lee, Secretary-General, Chinese Arbitration Association 8. Dr. Wei-Pin Chang, Former Vice President, China University of Technology
14:30–14:45	Break	ISG Review Panel
14:45–15:45	Session 10: TWAEA Staff Members <i>(hybrid)</i>	1. Ms. Cindy C.Y. Lee, Projects Division 2. Mr. Jan Fell, International Affairs Division 3. Ms. Penny Huang, Business Division 4. Ms. Veronica Huang, Business Division
15:45–16:00	Break	ISG Review Panel

Day 2: Tuesday 9 April 2024

Time	Activities & Interview Sessions	Participants
16:00–17:00	<p>Session 11:</p> <p>International Partners <i>(online)</i></p>	<p>Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Jun Kudo, Executive Director Ms. Kazuyo Hara, Director, Evaluation Research Department Ms. Ayako Tomono, Assistant Director, Office for International Planning <p>Thailand’s Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) <i>[to be determined]</i></p> <p>Center for Education Accreditation, Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City (VNUHCM CEA)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assoc. Prof. Le Ngoc Quynh Lam, VNUHCM CEA’s Director Mr. La Hoai Tuan, Chief of Office <p>Mongolian National Council for Education Accreditation (MNCEA)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Basbayar Batmunkh, Chair of Quality Assurance and NQF Department Undarmaa Munkhtulga, Senior Liaison Officer for Quality Assurance Bileguun Munkhtogt, Senior Liaison Officer of Qualification Recognition <p>Croatia’s Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assoc. Prof. Danijela Horvatek Tomić, PhD, ASHE Director Mr. sc. Sandra Bezjak, Assistant Director Vesna Dodiković-Jurković, PhD, Assistant Director
17:00–17:15	Break	ISG Review Panel
17:15–18:15	<p>Session 12:</p> <p>TWAEA Board of Directors <i>(in-person)</i></p>	<p>Board Members</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Jimmy C.Y. Yung, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Nan Kai University of Technology Dr. Michael J.K. Chen, Honorary Professor, Shih Chien University Dr. Shen-Li Fu, Honorary President, I-Shou University Dr. Sing-Chew Tam, Independent Director, Ta Liang Technology Co., Ltd. Dr. Wei-Chi Liu, President, Chung Hua University

Day 2: Tuesday 9 April 2024		
Time	Activities & Interview Sessions	Participants
18:30–19:30	Welcome dinner	
End of Day 2		

Day 3: Wednesday 10 April 2024		
Time	Activities & Interview Sessions	Participants
9:30–9:45	Transportation from Hotel to TWAEA Office	ISG Review Panel
9:45–10:00	Preparatory Meeting Day 3	ISG Review Panel
10:00–11:00	Session 13: Institutional Evaluation Steering Committee <i>(in-person)</i>	Committee Members 1. Dr. Chaur-Shin Yung, Chancellor, Fo Guang University 2. Dr. Chiang Kao, Professor Emeritus, National Cheng Kung University 3. Dr. Chun-Tsung Wang, Honorary Professor, National Taiwan University Committee Coordinator 1. Ms. Veronica Huang, Business Division
11:00–11:15	Break	ISG Review Panel
11:15–12:15	Call Back Session: The ISG Review Panel will call for another interview session with TWAEA staff if the ISG Review Panel need to clarify or ask additional questions. <i>(in-person)</i>	1. Ms. Shu-Yuan Wu, Secretary-General 2. Ms. Ying-Li Chou, Assistant Secretary-General 3. Ms. Chien Ling Kou, Projects Division 4. Ms. Hui-Ling Lin, International Affairs Division 5. Ms. Jenny Cheng, Administration & Accounting Division 6. Ms. Veronica Huang, Business Division
12:15–13:00	Lunch Break	ISG Review Panel
13:00–15:00	ISG Preparations to Deliver the Oral Exit Report	ISG Review Panel
15:00–15:30	Oral Exit Report <i>(in-person)</i>	1. Dr. Jin-Chuan Lin, Supervisor 2. Ms. Shu-Yuan Wu, Secretary-General 3. Ms. Ying-Li Chou, Assistant Secretary-General 4. Ms. Chien Ling Kou, Projects Division 5. Ms. Hui-Ling Lin, International Affairs Division 6. Ms. Veronica Huang, Business Division
15:30 Onwards	Transportation to the Hotel and/or airport.	ISG Review Panel

Day 3: Wednesday 10 April 2024		
Time	Activities & Interview Sessions	Participants
End of Day 3		

