

**INQAAHE**

**Global Council for  
Recognition of Quality  
Assurance Bodies in  
Tertiary Education (GCR)  
*Charter***



International  
Standards & Guidelines



Approved by the INQAAHE Board on September 25, 2024.

Ratified by the INQAAHE General Assembly on...

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## CHAPTER I – ESTABLISHMENT

The INQAAHE establishes an independent decision-making body - *Global Council for Recognition of Quality Assurance Bodies in Tertiary Education* (the Council or GCR, henceforth) - as its affiliate to ensure transparent and independent decision-making on external reviews of quality assurance bodies.

The conduct of the Council is governed by the Constitution of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), a copy of which is located at ([www.inqaah.org](http://www.inqaah.org)), and is aligned with the INQAAHE International Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (hereafter the ISGs).

A number of operational matters relating to the Council such as organizational values, mission and vision, conflict of interests, non-disclosure are governed by the INQAAHE Constitution, its policies and by-laws and the ISGs, hence are not reproduced here.

The GCR is to be established by the INQAAHE through:

- Approval by the INQAAHE Board (Constitution, Article 45.6), followed by
- Ratification by the INQAAHE General Assembly.

## CHAPTER II – OBJECTIVE

### Article 1

The objective of the *Global Council for Recognition of Quality Assurance Bodies in Tertiary Education* is to:

- a) Foster the highest level of trust and integrity in external review services offered by quality assurance bodies and accreditors.
- b) Serve as a reliable reference point for tertiary education communities:
  - a. in safeguarding their quality assurance practices.
  - b. in promoting full-fledged implementation of the UNESCO Regional and Global Conventions on Recognition of Qualifications in Tertiary Education, hence facilitating recognition of qualifications regionally and globally.

## CHAPTER III – FUNCTIONS

### Article 2

2.1 To achieve its objective, the functions of the GCR are as follows:

- a) Determine the Council's rules of procedure in line with the INQAAHE values and strategic objectives.

- b) Continuously enhance international quality assurance standards through regular reviews involving the relevant stakeholders and for making decisions about changes to standards based on the reviews.
  - c) Establish policies, procedures and criteria for decision making on recognition procedures of external quality assurance bodies in Tertiary Education.
  - d) Take decisions on recognition of external quality assurance bodies, inclusion exclusion, or suspension of recognition status on the INQAAHE Global Recognition Register in line with the INQAAHE ISGs.
  - e) In coordination with the INQAAHE Board, promote synergies with other tertiary education specialized networks and organizations in preventing and eradicating fraudulent practices in quality assurance and tertiary education practices.
  - f) Inform the INQAAHE Board of Directors and the CEO in the matters related to promoting integrity, trust and relevance of QA systems and practices.
- 2.2 The GCR's Rules of Procedure shall ensure full independence and impartiality of the decision-making function.

## **CHAPTER IV – THE KEY BODIES**

### **Article 3**

The functions outlined in Article 2 shall be carried out by:

- a) The GCR, which is the decision-making body on recognition matters.
- b) The GCR Executive Committee composed of the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and the INQAAHE CEO.

The GCR is supported by the INQAAHE Secretariat headed by the CEO.

## **CHAPTER V – THE GLOBAL COUNCIL FOR RECOGNITION**

### **Article 4: Composition**

- 4.1 The Council consists only of non-executive independent members – key stakeholders in tertiary education globally. That is, no member of the Council may be a member of the INQAAHE Board of Directors or paid staff of the INQAAHE.
- 4.2 The GCR is composed of expert individuals drawn from the following categories of stakeholders:
- a) External quality assurance associations/networks/quality assurance bodies

- b) Tertiary education associations/networks
  - c) Student unions/networks
  - d) International organizations with a mandate on tertiary education
  - e) Individual experts with proven track of expertise in tertiary education and quality assurance.
- 4.3 The composition of the GCR shall be representative of the INQAAHE seven geographic regions – Africa, Arab States, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Caribbean, North America and Western Europe and have a balanced gender representation.
- 4.4 The GCR shall consist of at least seven and up to 11 persons.
- 4.5 Members of the GCR shall be designated by election (70%) and co-option (30%). Co-opted seats shall be used to balance geographical, gender and necessary expertise representation.
- 4.6 At least fifty percent (50%) of the GCR members shall be representing experts nominated and elected by the INQAAHE Board. Current INQAAHE Board members are not eligible for nomination to the GCR.
- 4.7 All members of the GCR, regardless of representing a stakeholder organization or individual expertise, should act in their expert capacity to avoid any potential conflicts of interest.
- 4.8 The Council members are free from any interest and any business or other relationship which could, or could reasonably be perceived to, materially interfere with the member's ability to act in the best interests of the Council. The GCR members should make a declaration of interests to ensure independence, transparency, fairness, credibility, and accountability in decision-making.
- 4.9 Membership of the Council shall be disclosed in the annual report including whether a member is independent or not independent.
- 4.10 **Indemnity:** the Council members act in good faith and are protected from legal liability arising from their official duties.

## Article 5: Formation

- 5.1 The GCR is formed based on the nominations from key stakeholders and the INQAAHE Board as specified in Article 4, Clause 4.2. The INQAAHE Executive Committee shall form a specially designated committee (the Election Committee henceforth) to handle formation of the GCR, including elections.
- 5.2 The INQAAHE Election Committee shall establish and publish robust criteria and procedures for nominations/invitations/elections and prepare a shortlist of GCR member candidates. A key requirement for membership shall be a proven track record and rich experience in tertiary education quality assurance.

- 5.3 Stakeholder organizations with a global outreach may organize elections internal to their organization and nominate the candidate to the GCR. In such cases, nominations from such organisations must meet the required qualifications, skills, and characteristics as in the INQAAHE Election Committee published criteria.
- 5.4 The INQAAHE Board elects the GCR members based on the shortlist of candidates recommended by the Election Committee.
- 5.5 The GCR shall elect a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson from among its members.
- 5.6 The Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson shall be representatives of external quality assurance association/bodies, with proven track record of expertise in quality assurance and contribution to the global quality assurance community. No two office holders may be from the same organization.
- 5.7 A GCR member may resign by notifying the Chairperson with at least a two-months' notice. The Election Committee shall take measures to fill the position accordingly.
- 5.8 In case the Chairperson and/or the Deputy Chairperson decides to resign, a new election by the GCR from the same category of stakeholder and expertise shall take place at least one month prior to the official resignation date to ensure proper handover.
- 5.9 A GCR member who has been inactive (e.g., absence from conventions without apologies or prior notice; failure to participate in critical to the GCR matters) for more than six months and does not adequately respond to a warning, is considered as non-active and shall be subject to membership reconsideration by the GCR and the INQAAHE Board. In such cases, the GCR's Executive Committee shall inform the Secretary to start the procedure of resignation and new election/co-option to fill in the vacancy.

## **Article 6: Term of Service**

- 6.1 The term of service for the GCR members is three years with the right to be re-elected. In total, an individual member can be elected for two consecutive terms maximum of six years, following which the members can be re-nominated after a gap equivalent to an election cycle.
- 6.2 For student representation, this term is limited to 18 months for two consecutive terms, to align with the GCR's staggering cycles.
- 6.3 The GCR shall function on a staggered basis with 50% of rotation every 18 months, ensuring renewal of the GCR by half of the members every three years.

## **Article 7: Council's Conventions**

The Council shall convene at least twice a year and as needed when a decision-making on a recognition case is due.

## **Article 8: Quality Assurance**

- 8.1 To ensure legitimacy, credibility, trust and compliance of the INQAAHE recognition procedures with the ISGs, the INQAAHE Board of Directors shall establish cyclical external evaluation of recognition procedures conducted by the INQAAHE, and the GCR's operations.
- 8.2 For the purposes of external review, internal quality assurance procedures for the ISG reviews and the GCR's operating procedures should be established.
- 8.3 External review of the INQAAHE recognition procedures and the GCR's operating procedures, should be conducted by an independent entity as per the procedures and criteria established in the INQAAHE by-laws.

## **CHAPTER VI – THE GCR's EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **Article 9**

The functions of the GCR's Executive Committee shall be to:

- a) Work in close cooperation with the INQAAHE Secretariat and the CEO in addressing matters pertinent to the Council's smooth operation.
- b) Prepare and propose a general work programme covering a specific period.
- c) Address/study relevant questions within its competence.
- d) Advise the Secretariat on the required resources, including financial, to ensure smooth operation of the GCR.
- e) Advise the Council on exclusion of a non-active member and propose nominations to the Election Committee to fill in the vacancy.
- f) Advise the INQAAHE Secretariat on the necessary steps related to the status of quality assurance bodies on the Global Register.

## **CHAPTER VII – THE SECRETARIAT**

### **Article 10**

10.1 The INQAAHE Secretariat headed by its CEO shall serve as the administrative, financial, and technical unit as the Council may require. The key functions of the Secretariat shall be as follows:

- a) Administer recognition procedures, including appeals.
- b) Maintain the database of external reviewers.
- c) Make the necessary preparations for the GCR's conventions, including agenda.
- d) Keep an accurate record of the GCR's proceedings, including minutes of the meetings.



- e) Manage the financial and operational matters.
  - f) Establish and manage Global Register of recognized external QA bodies.
  - g) Any other business required for smooth operations of the GCR.
- 10.2 The INQAAHE CEO shall be the ex-officio Secretary of the GCR with no right to vote.
- 10.3 The CEO is to report to the INQAAHE Board of Directors on operational and financial matters.
- 10.4 The CEO and the Secretariat shall use the Council's internal proceedings and other **confidential information** exclusively for the purpose of the Council's credible operations.
- 10.5 Neither the Secretariat nor the CEO shall use the **confidential information** in any manner or disclose the **confidential information** to any third party without prior written consent of the body making a disclosure.

## CHAPTER VIII – BUDGETS AND EXPENSES

### Article 11

- 11.1 The GCR's expenses are part of the INQAAHE budget and form a separate budget line.
- 11.2 The INQAAHE Board of Directors shall allocate special funds, within its budget, for the GCR's operations. The budget line shall be managed by the CEO, reported to the INQAAHE Board by the Chair of the GCR.

## CHAPTER IX – DECISION MAKING

### Article 12

- 12.1 Decisions are made in the presence of required quorum, which shall be more than 50% of the GCR members.
- 12.2 Decisions of the GCR on all the matters pertinent to its functions shall be achieved based on a consensus.
- 12.3 In case a consensus cannot be achieved, voting shall take place.
- 12.4 In case of voting, decisions are made with a two-thirds majority of the GCR's members present – virtual or in person, within a week of opening the voting process. Members not being able to be present either virtually or in person shall express their opinion and cast vote electronically, in advance sending the opinion to the Chairperson with a copy to the Secretary.
- 12.5 Each member present shall have one vote. No proxies shall be applicable.
- 12.6 The Chairperson only shall have a vote in case of a tie.
- 12.7 The GCR deliberates and takes its decisions independently of any other body.

- 12.8 No member of the GCR shall take part in the consideration of any case where s/he has a conflict of interest. In case of conflict of interests, abstention or recusal procedure should be applied. Declarations of conflict shall be sought at the start of every meeting.

## **CHAPTER X - APPEALS**

### **Article 13**

- 13.1 The applicant can appeal against decisions of the GCR on procedural grounds or in the case of unreasonable decision to the INQAAHE Executive Committee within 10 days of decision being communicated to the applicant.
- 13.2 In case of an appeal an Appeals Committee consisting of three members [who have not been involved in previous consideration of the case] shall be appointed by the INQAAHE's Executive Committee. One of the three members shall act as Chair.
- 13.3 The members of the Appeals Committee shall have qualifications and/or expertise in quality assurance equivalent to those of the GCR members.
- 13.4 The Appeals Committee shall decide by simple majority.
- 13.5 The Appeals Committee shall either reject or allow the appeal. If the appeal is rejected, the GCR's decision is final. If the appeal is upheld, the GCR shall reconsider the Application, taking due account of the grounds of the appeal and the Appeals Committee's decision.
- 13.6 No member of the Appeals Committee shall take part in the consideration of any case where s/he has a conflict of interest.
- 13.7 Terms and conditions for appeals are specified in the INQAAHE by-laws governing recognition procedures.

## **CHAPTER XI - THE GLOBAL REGISTER**

### **Article 14**

- 14.1 To be recognized and included in the Global Register, the quality assurance provider shall demonstrate that it operates in alignment with the quality assurance standards and guidelines as approved by the INQAAHE Board.
- 14.2 The INQAAHE Secretariat, under the lead of the CEO, shall establish and maintain the Global Register of recognized external quality assurance bodies/accreditors, which shall be public.
- 14.3 Any external quality assurance provider in tertiary education, regardless of INQAAHE membership status, may seek recognition by the GCR and, in case of success, inclusion into the Global Register.

- 14.4 All changes made to the Global Register, including inclusion, exclusion, and suspension of an externally reviewed QA body shall be made based on the GCR's decision.
- 14.5 The Global Register shall be hosted by the Secretariat and made publicly available on the INQAAHE website on a specially designated page.
- 14.6 The Secretariat shall establish rules of procedures for maintenance, continuous enhancement, and the potential relationship and/or integration with other relevant databases.
- 14.7 The GCR is the sole responsible for inclusion, exclusion and suspension of QA bodies in the Global Register (Clause 2.1, para e).

## CHAPTER XII – TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

### Article 15

- 15.1 Upon ratification of this Charter by the INQAAHE Board, the INQAAHE Executive Committee, under the lead of the INQAAHE President shall set up an Election Committee to develop and publish a Call for Nominations, hence manage election of the GCR members.
- 15.2 The INQAAHE Executive Committee shall convene the first meeting of the GCR by inviting the elected and co-opted members of the GCR.
- 15.3 At the first meeting of the GCR, the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson shall be elected by the GCR members.
- 15.4 Once the GCR is established, the INQAAHE Recognition Committee shall cease its operations, and its functions shall be transferred to the newly established GCR.
- 15.5 The newly established Council shall develop all the relevant rules of procedures for the Council's operation and adopt them within the first six months of its operations. Prior to the adoption, the rules of procedure applied by the Recognition Committee of INQAAHE shall apply to ensure smooth transition. However, the Council shall have liberty to change any of the points that considers relevant and crucial for independent decision making.
- 15.6 The GCR shall publish all its by-laws, rules of procedure and any other operating processes, policies or procedures transparently on the INQAAHE website within 6 weeks of approval of introduction or amendment of same.
- 15.7 The inaugural term of the GCR shall be three years for all the members, based on the necessity of the GCR to establish its functions.
- 15.8 The GCR shall operate on a staggered basis starting the second official term (year 4 since its establishment).

- 15.9 To initiate the staggered cycles, in year 4 of its inception, 50% of the GCR members shall be elected/co-opted for the duration of 18 months only. This arrangement refers to the second term only. Starting term 3 (year 5 since inception) all the members of the GCR will have terms as per Article 6.

## **CHAPTER XIII – AMENDMENTS**

### **Article 16**

- 16.1 Amendments to this Charter shall be decided by the INQAAHE Board based on consultation with the GCR and relevant stakeholders, with at least six months' notice of proposed amendments.
- 16.2 Amendments shall come into force as proposed in the amendment proposal, unless otherwise decided by the INQAAHE Board.
- 16.3 The INQAAHE Board will review this Charter on a regular basis to ensure it remains consistent with the INQAAHE's mission and objectives.

## **CHAPTER XIV – DISSOLUTION**

### **Article 17**

- 17.1 The INQAAHE Board of Directors, based on evidence demonstrating that the GCR is no longer relevant and is dysfunctional may take a decision to dissolve the GCR.
- 17.2 The INQAAHE Board may dissolve the GCR, after consultation with the GCR and relevant stakeholders as defined in 4.2 above.
- 17.3 The INQAAHE Board of Directors shall inform the GCR of its decision, with immediate effect. In this case the Secretariat and the CEO will take respective steps to ensure proper hand over.
- 17.4 In case the GCR takes a decision to dissolve itself, the GCR shall inform the INQAAHE Board on its dissolution intentions at least one year prior to the act.
- 17.5 In both cases, the INQAAHE Board will take over all the assets and functions until a solution is achieved.

## ANNEX A

### The GCR's Culture (to be elaborated in the GCR's by-laws)

The GCR actively seeks to have an 'engaged culture' which is characterised by candour and a willingness to challenge.

The following table is used to provide evidence of an engaged culture:

- Agendas:
  - o The agendas of the Council limit presentation time and maximise discussion time.
  - o There are lots of opportunities for informal interactions among Council members.
- Norms:
  - o The Council members are honest yet constructive.
  - o Members actively seek out other members' views and contributions.
  - o Members spend appropriate time on important issues.
- Beliefs:
  - o "If I don't come prepared, I will be embarrassed."
  - o "If I don't actively participate, I won't be fulfilling my responsibility."
  - o "I'll earn the respect of fellow Council members by making valuable contributions and taking responsibility for what I do."
  - o "If I can't carry my load, or if I can't agree with what's going on, I should resign."
- Values:
  - o The Council serves the tertiary education community in line with the INQAAHE values
  - o The Council is responsible to various stakeholders.
  - o The Council members are personally accountable for action conducted and decisions made.
  - o The Council is responsible for maintaining and enhancing the INQAAHE's stature in the tertiary education globally.
  - o The Council members respect each other.
- Reporting:
  - o Proceedings of all meetings are minuted and signed by the Chairperson or its Deputy.
  - o Minutes of all Council meetings are circulated to members and approved by the members at the subsequent meeting.
  - o Resolutions are first put to the Council in draft form (as a "Council Paper") and, once passed, are recorded in a Resolutions Register for the Council.