![ISG International Standards & Guidelines logo]

International Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ISG)

Standard	Minimum requirements The Quality Assurance Agency **must:**
Legitimacy, Mission, and Governance	
1. Legal basis and recognition *The quality assurance agency is legally established and is recognized by relevant stakeholders.*	1.1. have its purpose, authority, and functions established through a legal or regulatory framework or recognised by government or the higher education community it serves.
	1.2. operate as a legal entity within the country's regulatory framework.
	1.3. publicly share its legal foundation and recognition.
2. Mission *The quality assurance agency has a defined and publicized mission that explicitly states its role in external quality assurance of higher education, outlining the purpose and scope of its activities.*	2.1. have a published mission statement that states the agency's role in external quality assurance of higher education and outlines the purpose and scope of its quality assurance activities.
	2.2. involve relevant stakeholders in developing the agency's public mission.

3. Governance	3.1. have a clearly defined and publicly documented governance structure, setting out the roles, responsibilities and composition of the governing body and its relationship with executive leadership.
The quality assurance agency has a clear governance model, ensuring its independence and accountability to key stakeholders.	3.2. outline processes for appointing and removing governing body members.
	3.3. have conflict of interest policies for its governing body.
	3.4. engage diverse stakeholders in its governance structure.
	3.5. ensure independence of its governing body from external interference, including from government.

Organizational Capacity and Strategic Planning

4. Organizational structure	4.1. ensure its organizational structure has clearly defined divisions or functions, roles, and responsibilities, aligned with the provider's mission, goals, and processes.
The quality assurance agency's organizational structure supports the effective, efficient, and transparent execution of its mission and objectives.	4.2. set out where decisional authority rests within the agency for different activities.
5. Resources and capacity	5.1. have adequate physical, financial, technological, and human resources, which are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose.
The quality assurance agency has adequate physical, financial, technological, and human resources to fulfil its mission and objectives.	5.2. offer a comprehensive induction program to new staff.
	5.3. provide regular opportunities for professional development, and for staff to identify and communicate their professional development needs.
	5.4. have a sustainable funding model for long-term viability.

6. Strategic planning *The quality assurance agency is guided by robust strategic planning, ensuring that its quality assurance activities align with its mission and support tracking progress and impact towards goals.*	6.1. develop a strategic plan that aligns with its mission, vision, and long-term objectives, articulating key objectives and priorities for the planning period.
	6.2. create detailed operational plans that break down strategic objectives into tasks, specify timelines, resources, and responsibilities, and establish measurable goals and performance indicators.
	6.3. have a detailed and adequate budget that covers all aspects of its operations.

Quality Assurance Framework

7. Quality assurance procedures *The quality assurance agency conducts its external quality assurance activities based on transparent, clear, and comprehensive procedures.*	7.1. have comprehensive, transparent, and publicly accessible procedures, outlining all the phases of its external quality assurance processes.
	7.2. ensure providers understand what is required of them, how findings are reached, the consequences of the evaluation exercise, and how to engage effectively with each phase of the external quality assurance process.
8. Quality assurance standards *The quality assurance agency conducts its external quality assurance activities based on publicly available, clear, and actionable standards.*	8.1. set out in clear and public documents specific and actionable standards that higher education providers are expected to meet.
	8.2. make clear to providers what is required of them to demonstrate compliance, setting out minimum requirements.
9. Fitness for purpose and institutional autonomy *The quality assurance agency ensures that its quality assurance procedures and standards are and remain fit-for-purpose for the different and evolving types of higher education providers and provision within its remit, acknowledging institutional autonomy and diversity.*	9.1. ensure its quality assurance procedures and standards cover all types of education provision and providers within its remit, with required variations, as applicable, to ensure they are fit-for-purpose.
	9.2. review its quality assurance procedures and standards on a cyclical basis to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose in response to the sector's dynamic landscape.

	9.3. develop and review its quality assurance procedures and standards consulting externally and in a transparent way with key stakeholders, in particular higher education providers that fall within the agency's remit.
	9.4. give due consideration to minimising unnecessary administrative burden for higher education providers when engaging with its external quality assurance processes.

Evaluation and Outcomes

10. Evaluation and decision making *The quality assurance agency's evaluation procedures ensure its quality assurance findings are evidence-based, consistent, fair, and impartial.*	10.1. explain the evaluation procedures it uses, ensuring all key stakeholders understand the basis and the modality for its quality assurance decisions.
	10.2. establish how it ensures consistency, fairness, and impartiality in its findings. including through: • standardized assessment procedures • clear assessment criteria • transparent decision-making procedures • internal moderation processes • training programs for reviewers and agency officers • conflict of interest policies • appeals procedures
11. Peer-reviewers *The quality assurance agency has policies for the recruitment, training, and appointment of a suitable pool of peer-reviewers, ensuring that they have the necessary expertise and preparation to conduct its different external quality assurance activities effectively, impartially, consistently, and professionally.*	11.1. have documented policies for recruitment, training, and appointment of peer-reviewers.
	11.2. ensure that appointed peer-reviewers have an appropriate academic background and professional experience.
	11.3. have a conflict of interest policy for the appointment of reviewers to specific quality assurance exercises.

	11.4. comprehensive reviewers' training covering its quality assurance procedures and standards.
	11.5. have a system for monitoring and evaluating the performance of reviewers.
12. Transparency of outcomes *The quality assurance agency publicly shares the findings of its quality assurance activity, in line with cultural, legal, and regulatory requirements, and publishes the list of those providers that have successfully met quality assurance standards.*	12.1. publicly share quality assurance findings, with consideration for cultural, legal, or regulatory requirements.
	12.2. publish a list of providers that successfully met the agency's quality assurance expectations, including information on the date of last review for each provider, and the validity period of the evaluation findings.

Quality Culture

13. Internal quality assurance *The quality assurance agency has transparent internal quality assurance mechanisms that ensure its organizational structure, objectives, and activities remain fit-for-purpose and respond to the evolving nature of higher education and the changing policy environment.*	13.1. have internal quality assurance mechanisms.
	13.2. link its internal quality assurance processes to strategic and operational planning cycles.
	13.3. engage stakeholders in its internal quality assurance processes to align with sector priorities.
	13.4. establish feedback mechanisms for all staff, including external members of its governing bodies, and, where applicable, review panel experts.
14. External reviews of agencies *The quality assurance agency undergoes regular external reviews of its operations and engages proactively and constructively with the resulting recommendations and required actions.*	14.1. undergo regular external reviews of its systems, practices, and operations by independent and credible experts or organizations.
	14.2. engage proactively and constructively with the external review process and its outcomes.

15. Integrity and transparency: *The quality assurance agency adheres to defined ethical and professional principles, supported by formal policies and procedures that ensure integrity is embedded in all aspects of its work.*	15.1. have defined ethical and professional principles, supported by formal policies and procedures, applying to all staff, including external members of its governing bodies, and, where applicable, review panel experts, to ensure the integrity of its operations and quality assurance activities.
	15.2. publish and make easily accessible the key policies and procedures underpinning its operations.

Sector Engagement and Enhancement

16. Stakeholder engagement: *The quality assurance agency is aware of its stakeholder environment and proactively and strategically engages with a diverse range of stakeholders to support the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of its quality assurance activities, while advancing its mission.*	16.1. engages with a diverse range of stakeholders to support the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of its quality assurance activities.
	16.2. involve relevant stakeholders in the agency's governance structures and consultation activities that inform the development of its quality assurance framework.
17. International engagement: *The quality assurance agency engages internationally to support the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of its quality assurance activities.*	17.1. remain attentive to international and regional quality assurance developments.
	17.2. participate in knowledge-sharing and, where possible, joint quality assurance activity.
	17.3. benchmark practices against internationally recognized standards.
18. Thematic analysis and guidance: *The quality assurance agency prepares and disseminates thematic analyses and guidance documents to contribute to the enhancement of higher education and quality assurance.*	18.1. develop thematic analyses of the findings of its quality assurance activities to identify emerging trends, areas of improvement, and good practice to inform the continuous improvement of the higher education sector it oversees.
	18.2. develop guidance documents to support higher education providers in responding to innovation in teaching and learning and academic practice.

	18.3. engage with sector experts and stakeholders in selecting themes and developing content for guidance documents.