Learning outcomes, qualifications framework, external quality assurance – the approach of the ESG 2015

ASEM PLA on Qualifications Frameworks in relation to Quality Assurance and Recognition / Expert Group on Credit Transfer

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European Framework for Quality Assurance in HE

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)
- Common framework
- Enable assurance and improvement
- Support mutual trust

Criteria for registration

Qualifications Framework of the EHEA (QF EHEA)
- Three levels (Ba, Ma, PhD)
- Learning outcomes
- ECTS ranges

Referred in standard 1.2

European Quality Assurance Register for HE (EQAR)
- Transparency of QA
- Information on bona fide agencies
- Mutual trust and recognition

Applied by EQAR-reg. Agencies

European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes
- Agreed standards and procedure for joint programmes

Based on ESG & QF
EHEA Key Commitments

1) Three-Cycle System compatible with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) and scaled by ECTS: qualifications defined in a National Qualification Framework (NQF) which is compatible with the QF-EHEA

2) Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC): recognition practices in compliance with the LRC, incl. use of the Diploma Supplement

3) Quality Assurance in conformity with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG): institutions assure quality of their programmes following the ESG, external QA (at programme or institutional level) by ESG-compliant agencies
Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG)

- Common framework for quality assurance systems at European, national and institutional level
- Standards and Guidelines for:
  1) Internal quality assurance
  2) External quality assurance
  3) Quality assurance agencies
- Developed jointly by the main stakeholders
  - Higher education institutions (EUA, EURASHE), students (ESU), quality assurance agencies (ENQA), staff (Education International) & employers (BusinessEurope)
- Adopted by ministers of higher education (2005, revised 2015)
- Underline primary responsibility of higher education institutions for quality of their provision
QA in the EHEA

- External quality assurance at different levels:
  - Evaluation or accreditation of study programmes
  - Evaluation, accreditation or audit of HE institutions

- ESG: quality assurance vs. quality?
  - Quality is in the eye of the beholder (= stakeholder)
  - Four common purposes of higher education
  - Reference to qualifications frameworks (ESG 1.2)
  - Several dimensions of quality addressed in ESG Part 1

- Embedded in a broader EHEA framework
Qualifications Framework (QF - EHEA)

- Adopted by ministers in 2005
- Three cycles + (optional) short cycle
  - Generic descriptors for each cycle, based on learning outcomes and competences
  - Credit ranges (ECTS) for first and second cycle
- Compatible with European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL)
  - Bologna (Short cycle), Ba, Ma, PhD ↔ EQF levels (5,) 6, 7, 8
- National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) self-certified against QF-EHEA
Implementation

EQAR-registered quality assurance agency & NQF self-certified to QF-EHE or EQF-LLL

Registered agency but NQF not self-certified

NQF self-certified but no registered agency

Neither
ESG 1.2: design and approval of programmes

[...] designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification [...] refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Objectives and outcomes referred throughout Part 1, e.g.

- Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment (1.3)
- Student admission, progression, recognition, certification (1.4)

ESG 1.9: on-going monitoring

[...] monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society.
“Where the delivery of programmes is formally regulated, either by a ministry or other organisation external to the delivering institutions, the framework and its components may be used to establish and/or identify whether specified minimum standards have been met. [...] where the academic institutions have autonomous powers to design their own programmes and set academic standards themselves, qualification frameworks are used as a ‘point of reference’ [...]”

“ [...] the application of national frameworks within quality assurance will vary with regard to emphasis and detail of process. [...] essentially concerned with “trust building” and establishing mutual confidence [...] greater clarity about qualifications and their quality assurance, and progression between them.”
Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme-level EQA</th>
<th>Institutional EQA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intended</strong></td>
<td><strong>Achieved</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The educational goals of the study programme are clearly laid out and published.</td>
<td>[...] that programme content reflects programme objectives and that the organisation of teaching and educational quality supports students’ learning and the achievement of these objectives,</td>
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<td>[...] formulated goals [...] in line with the corresponding level in the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area and comply with the general standards of the discipline and/or the professional field.</td>
<td>[...] regular evaluations of programmes [...] and [...] the results of this are included in the further development of programme objectives, contents and organisation</td>
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The institution has a practice which ensures that programmes have an appropriate level, an academic content and an educational quality that supports students' learning and the achievement of programme objectives. [...] that programmes continually maintain a level that corresponds to the relevant type descriptions in the [Country’s] qualifications framework for higher education programmes.
Vision

Qualification in country A ➔ map & recognise ➔ Level in country B

QA ➔ NQF A ➔ QF-EHEA ➔ NQF B

ESG & EQAR ➔ self-certification
Thank you for your attention!

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