

ESG 2015 – what has changed and what does it mean for the QA professionals?

Lisbon, 6 June 2016

Maria Kelo, ENQA



European Quality Assurance Framework



QA: one action line in the Bologna Process since the beginning (1999)

2005: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)

- Proposed by the E4 Group (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE = the stakeholders, not ministries!)

2008: European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), established by E4 → **list of “trustworthy agencies”**

2012: Decision to revise the ESG by 2015

- undertaken by the stakeholders
- updating taking account of developments since 2005
- clarification

2015: adoption of ESG 2015 by the Yerevan Ministerial Conference

The ESG basics

Three parts covering

- Internal QA within HEIs
- External QA by QAAs
- Internal QA and the operation of QAAs

Focus on learning and teaching in HE, including

- Learning environment
- Links to research and innovation

The ESG are applicable to all types of HE; irrespective of mode of provision or place of delivery and to agencies wherever they carry out EQA activities

The standards: agreed and accepted practice – Should be taken account of and adhered to

The guidelines explain why the standard is important and describe how standards might be implemented

→ Remain generic principles that allow for diversity of practical implementation

ESG 2015 and ESG 2005

Mandate: Bucharest, 2012

ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE in
cooperation with EI, BUSINESSEUROPE,
EQAR

Steering committee and drafting
group

Stakeholder driven: based on
outcomes of the MAP-ESG and other
experience with using the ESG 2005

Open consultation

Dialogue with the BFUG (= ministry
representatives)

Approval by the BFUG, adoption by
the Yerevan Ministerial Conference in
May 2015



Guiding principles for the revision



Keep the strengths: integrated concept and understanding of QA, broad applicability, broad ownership

Overcome the weaknesses: vagueness, redundancies, **inconsistencies, confusion between “standard” and “guideline”...**

Update: **ESG as part of the ‘Bologna-infrastructure’** - taking into account recent developments in QA and HE in general (NQFs and QF-EHEA; ECTS; LOs based approach...)

Enable adaptability to future developments

Finding the balance between changing too much and too little



ESG 2015 and ESG 2005

Comparative analysis of the ESG 2015 and ESG 2005

Changes in context, scope, purposes and principles

Changes in standards' wording

Changes in guidelines' content and "philosophy"

ESG are a document that needs to be read as a whole: introductory part is of central importance! Also: parts 1, 2 and 3 build on each other and are parts of one whole.

All parts have undergone significant changes, and requirements have become more stringent

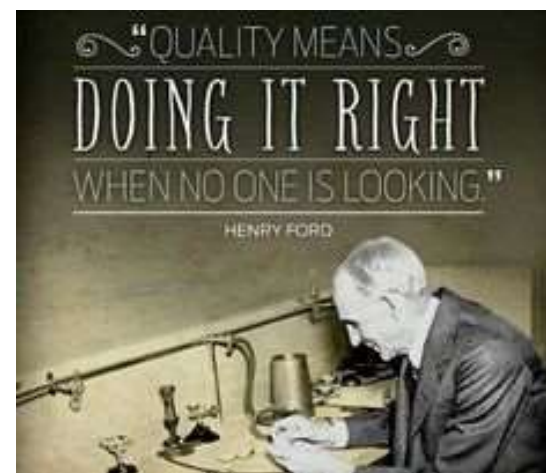
Biggest changes in part 1

www.equip-project.eu/activities/comparative-analysis



Purposes of the ESG 2015

- Set a common framework for quality assurance systems for learning and teaching at European, national and institutional level
- Enable the assurance and improvement of quality of higher education in the European higher education area
- Support mutual trust, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders
- Provide information on quality assurance in the EHEA



The principles for QA in the EHEA in ESG 2015

- HEIs have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance
- QA responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students
- QA supports the development of a quality culture
- QA takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society



Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives.

(William A. Foster)

izquotes.com

ESG 2015 – Part 1 in details

Standard 1.1 – **importance of QA policy as part of HEI’s strategic management.** Guidelines list some characteristics of a good policy, e.g. it should reflect on the relationship between research, learning and teaching. Students listed as being jointly responsible for IQA with other institutional actors.

Standard 1.9 – on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes: guidelines stress the importance of student and stakeholder feedback. Monitoring and revision should take into consideration workload; progression and completion rates; effectiveness of the assessment methods (link to 1.3.) and the learning environment and available support (1.6)

Standard 1.10 – cyclical external quality assurance – no longer in part 2: responsibility of the cyclicity is with the institution, not the agency (open area of QA in the EHEA?)



*“Quality is not an act. It is a habit.”
Aristotle*

ESG 2015 – Part 1 in details – cont.

Shift to student-centred learning: SCL and LOs are mentioned in 5 out of the 10 standards!

1.3 - a new standard focusing altogether on student-centred learning, teaching and assessment → **requires a shift in thinking about “what is quality” in teaching and learning**. Not only a conceptual shift but leads to very concrete requirements (see the guidelines)

Is teaching staff ready for SCL?

Are the required skills there?

Are the necessary tools available?

→ training and support, rewards,

→ incentives, **time, resources...**

(Are *students* ready for SCL??)

(Are *QA agencies* ready for SCL?)



ESG 2015 – Part 1 in details – cont.



Standards 1.7 and 1.8 – information management and dissemination

A lot of data and information is being collected by HEIs! BUT...

(I)QA systems should be capable to generate information that is valuable for both internal decision-making and external stakeholders

Need to collect information that is useful and makes sense for their own context and purposes

Think about ... Whether less is more? What is useful and informative? Link to strategy? → help to assess achievement

Do this through a variety of information sources and methods in order to ensure a comprehensive and objective view of institutional activities

Interesting data and analysis available in EUA study “ESG Part 1 – Are universities ready?”

ESG 2015 - Main changes in Part 2



Rearrangement to make it more consistent and logical

Standard 1.10: cyclical review (moved out of Part 2)

Standard 2.4: peer-review experts

- A new standard → More focus on the role of peer-reviewers
- requires a student member, in guidelines recommends international experts → a cultural and practical challenge

Standard 2.6: reporting

- requires publication of full expert report (summaries and/or decisions not enough!) → legislative changes may be needed!
- whether positive or negative
- **“Intended readership” clarified**
- Features of good practice encouraged

Standard 2.7 (from ex 3.7 guidelines): complaints and appeals

- emphasised (a standard of its own)
- now required for all procedures (whether formal outcomes or not) → a change for many agencies

ESG 2005– Part 2		ESG 2015– Part 2
2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures		2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance
2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes		2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose
2.3 Criteria for decisions		2.3 Implementing processes
2.4 Processes fit for purpose		2.4 Peer-review experts (new)
2.5 Reporting		2.5 Criteria for outcomes
2.6 Follow-up procedures		2.6 Reporting
2.7 Periodic reviews (to part 1)		2.7 Complaints and appeals (from part 3)
2.8 System-wide analyses (to part 3)		

ESG 2015 - Main Changes in Part 3

Rearranging to be more coherent and logical (3.1. combines previous 3.1, 3.3, and 3.5)

3.2: Recognising public authority does not have to be from an EHEA country/a country.

3.3: Notion of independence explained better

- organisational, operational, and of outcomes
- third party involved *in individual capacity* (to strike the balance between **stakeholder involvement and independence**; “solely based on expertise”)

3.4 thematic analysis

- 2005 “from time to time”, 2015: “regularly” → more strict
- not system-wide necessarily (agencies may also not operate in “a system”, or across several “systems”)

3.5: resources - now has **guidelines that explain what is “adequate resources”**: not only QA activities, but also thematic analysis, information activities, etc. → financial resources, but also HR (number and type)

3.6: Professional conduct (see later)

3.7: cyclical external review of agencies (appeared before in guidelines to 3.8), to create a parallel with HEIs (see 1.10))

In detail: 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Standard:

“Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.”

Guidelines mention that:

- **“The** agencies need to be accountable to their stakeholders. Therefore, high professional standards and integrity **in the agency’s work are indispensable”**
- **Agencies should have “processes** to establish the status and recognition of the institutions with which it conducts external quality **assurance”**
- **Agencies need to have a policy that “outlines the** appropriate communication with the relevant authorities of those jurisdictions where they operate”
- Ensure that any activities carried out and material produced by subcontractors are in line with the ESG

→ Agencies need to create such policies and processes where these do not exist, yet.

→ takes seriously the fact that agencies have started to operate abroad, and how this can lead to issues regarding the seriousness/ESG compliance of activities carried out abroad. EQAR will monitor this!

ESG 2005 – Part 3		ESG 2015 – Part 3
3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education		3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance
3.2 Official status		3.2 Official status
3.3 Activities		3.3 Independence
3.4 Resources		3.4 Thematic analysis (from part 2)
3.5 Mission statement		3.5 Resources
3.6 Independence		3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct
3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies (moved to part 2)		3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies (from guidelines)
3.8 Accountability procedures		

Conclusions

ESG 2015 are not “reinventing the wheel” but responding to developments and current challenges

Most changes in Part 1 – HEIs create and ensure the quality of their own provision in the first instance

Constant enhancement and the creation of a quality culture underpin the ESG

Collaborative element underlined: one document, not three → one element (IQA, EQA) cannot exist and flourish without the other

Implementation is already on-going – and it will differ from one context to another → a richness, not an obstacle

Sharing of good practice and experience will be a helpful way to **“make the most out of it”**

Thank you!

