

AFRICAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION (ASG-QA)

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FOREWORD

Harmonised quality higher education systems are imperative for Africa to realise the vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent. The African Union (AU) has, at the highest level, called for the harmonisation and strengthening of the quality of higher education in Africa to make it both locally relevant and globally competitive. This is in line with the AU's Agenda 2063: "The Africa We Want", and is an important instrument for facilitating the recently signed AU Continental Free Trade Area. These efforts are a culmination of Africa's long time desire for harmonised higher education systems that can facilitate the mobility of trained people with accredited qualifications. Diverse systems of higher education have resulted in the lack of mutual recognition of university degrees, constraining academic integration and the mobility of students across the African continent. Collective endorsement of harmonisation and mutual recognition presupposes increased attention to quality and quality assurance in higher education. The rapid growth in the number of students and higher education institutions (HEIs), and the increased focus on employability, have made quality and quality assurance central topics. If Africa's investment in the education of its youth is to reap demographic dividends, quality and quality assurance in higher education and training are essential.

The AU's vision of building an integrated Africa requires harmonised education, underpinned by intra-Africa mobility and skills portability. The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) recognises that 'Harmonised education and training systems are essential for the realisation of intra-Africa mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation'. Heads of State and Government of the African Union have further institutionalised their appreciation of the role of higher education in achieving the AU vision, by taking a Decision calling for mechanisms for harmonisation and quality assurance to ensure comparable higher education in Africa, and for the establishment of a continental Accreditation and Quality Agency. This is reflected in the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 as a means to develop and monitor educational quality standards across the continent.

The African Union Commission (AUC) works with African higher education institutions in promoting harmonisation and quality assurance, supported by partnership from the European Union (EU) and EU institutions. The Association of African Universities (AAU) has been identified as the AU's lead implementing agency in higher education in Africa.

Harmonisation seeks a shared view on quality criteria and standards, and an equivalent way of assessing the quality. It is crucial to harmonise the standards and criteria so that all universities will be regulated according to comparable standards. Indeed, harmonisation does not mean that every institution or each country is forced into a uniform system. It rather means that the basic framework for quality assessment is equivalent. A key milestone for fostering harmony within the diverse African higher education system is the establishment of a continental quality assurance framework. The AUC therefore initiated development of the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF) to provide a continental platform for enhancing the provision of higher education quality, and promoting compatible methodologies.

One of the necessary instruments for the appropriate functioning of PAQAF is the development of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA). Proper implementation of the ASG-QA can contribute to the provision of quality higher education, and ensure that the qualifications obtained by students and their experience of higher education remain consonant with programme requirements, institutional vision and mission, and the objectives of higher education. In order to optimally achieve this, a fundamental prerequisite is that HEIs inculcate a culture of evidence-based quality in all their activities. The AUC believes that the ASG-QA provides an overarching framework for quality assurance and that its implementation will be supported by the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM).

The African Union Commission appreciates the work that went into development of the ASG-QA, in the context of the 'Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Initiative' (HAQAA) by a Technical Working Group of experts from five African regions. The ASG-QA has been subjected to a series of consultations of major African higher education agencies and experts, as well as Member States quality assurance bodies, student organisations and other key stakeholders. I therefore believe that it reflects a valid African perspective, while not ignoring international good practices. Thank you to the EU and partner agencies that provided financial and technical support.

I call on Member States to promote the use of this instrument towards an African quality higher education space, contributing to the collective African vision.

H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Following several decades of post-independence and post-liberation development on the African continent, much progress has been made on a number of fronts in developing societies; establishing stable governments, and instituting systems of higher education and economic production, amongst others.

Development has been steady in many countries, resulting in a better standard of living for their citizens. It is clear, however, that the colonial, post-colonial and other exploitative legacies have left deep imprints on developmental challenges, which in most instances in more than half a century of self-determination, have hindered African countries from achieving full development, including on the higher education front. This has been exacerbated by instances of internal and regional conflicts, poor governance, corruption, and injudicious use and management of available resources. In most cases, the scale of challenges related to development have seemed overwhelming, and disproportionate to the amount of resources available to address them adequately and sustainably.

The objective of higher education in Africa in the 21st Century is to increase access and ensure quality education provision, ensuring that higher education is responsive to Africa's priorities and relevant to the labour market. This includes inculcating entrepreneurial and innovative mind frames and African values in order to contribute to social economic development, job creation and employability. Currently, however, too many graduates do not meet the needs of employers. Higher education development should take place in the context of African continental, regional and national needs, and be based on African epistemologies and content.

It is unquestionable that education plays a fundamental role in the development of nations. While much international focus on educational development over several decades has been on basic education, it is now realised and accepted that investment in higher education yields significant benefits for nations. Developing economies require high level and skilled human capacity to identify and leverage opportunities flowing from exploitation of natural and social resources and intellectual capital, globalisation and macroeconomic changes. Equally, to take advantage of the developments in technology and contribute to innovations, higher level research knowledge is critical, which mostly derives from higher education. From a developmental

perspective, in order to build research and innovation ecosystems, promote and preserve democratisation and leadership and strengthen collaborative cultures, higher education needs to yield diverse and complex capabilities.

In order to liberate its full potential and work cooperatively in the continental interests, and to realise its aspirations, Africa has to: (1) unleash its potential to become self-reliant in its higher education provision, by for example, promoting leadership and good governance in higher education institutions; and (2) enhance investment in higher education while assuring inclusion, greater equity and opportunity for all to access higher education. However, adequate financial resources remain the core challenge of higher education across the continent. Governments should do their utmost to increase funds for the growing demands of African higher education. Funding should be secured in the long-term in order to develop stable and resourced higher education systems throughout the whole continent.

Strengthening local resourcing and leadership in multi-lateral partnerships where joint or cooperative ventures focus more on local priorities and capacities will promote relevance and quality assurance. The African Union drive for enhancing intra-African collaboration, academic, mobility, and pooling of resources and capacities in higher education will help to enhance efficiencies and promote quality through constructive peer pressure. Higher education institutions are vitally important vehicles to achieve these African social economic aspirations. In these developments, students are the key stakeholders whose voice should be at the core of all discussions.

The role of quality assurance is, therefore, crucial in supporting African higher education systems and institutions in responding to challenges related to legal frameworks, governance, funding, qualifications of teaching staff, and research capacity. To address some of these challenges and ensure quality, there is need for collaboration and sharing of resources between institutions both locally and internationally. There is also a need for greater international cooperation which enhances mobility of both staff and students. Funding should be secured also for the development of a comprehensive quality assurance environment in both higher education institutions (HEI) and quality assurance agencies.

PURPOSE

The ASG-QA will support HEIs and quality assurance agencies (QAAs) in Africa in implementing good quality assurance (QA) practices by guiding them in the application of standards and guidelines in higher education, helping them to develop adequate internal QA mechanisms that fit international best practices and assisting them in assessing their own quality through self-assessment.

The specific purpose of the ASG-QA is, therefore, to support HEIs and QAAs in Member States in Africa to: (a) have a common framework and understanding of QA systems for teaching and learning among all stakeholders at continental, regional and national level; (b) develop mutual trust, thus facilitating recognition and mobility of students and human resources within and across national borders of the continent; (c) ensure quality improvement/enhancement in higher education on the continent through self-assessment, external peer review and continuous monitoring and evaluation; (d) promote transparency and accountability by providing appropriate information on QA to the public; (e) support HEIs to develop a sustainable quality culture; (f) promote international competitiveness of Africa's higher education system; and (g) support the production of relevant teaching and learning resources as well as student assessment instruments.

As the ASG-QA and the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM)¹ are complementary and mutually supportive; the ASG-QA will operate alongside the AQRM and will complement the AQRM in supporting African higher education institutions to develop a sustainable quality culture.

The ASG-QA are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external QA in higher education. These standards are not meant to be prescriptive but they rather provide a mechanism for quality attainment in African HEIs and QAAs. They are developed to eventually add value to institutions and QAAs by providing a unified framework applicable to all QA processes, allowing an enhancement-led approach for the escalation of institutional and educational quality.

National QAAs should function as the national contacts for the ASG-QA. The ASG-QA can serve as the guiding framework in facilitating the establishment of QAAs in countries where they do not yet exist.

APPROACH USED IN FRAMING THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The ASG-QA are stated as common minimum standards or requirements that must be complied with. However, individual HEIs and QAAs can add additional standards that will reflect their own traditions and contexts. The guidelines describe how the

1 The African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) has been developed as a tool to underpin an African system that will ensure that the performance of higher education institutions can be compared against a set of common criteria and to facilitate a culture of continuous quality improvement through self-evaluation exercises and external validation. The AQRM is instrumental to help institutions assess themselves for continuous improvement by fostering the development of internal quality assurance systems.

standards might be achieved and allow for the provision of evidence to support the status of quality at HEIs and QAAs. They provide examples of good practice and the list is not exhaustive.

PRINCIPLES

The ASG-QA are based on the following principles to ensure the success of quality assurance in higher education in Africa: (a) quality and quality assurance are primarily the responsibility of HEIs; and (b) the autonomy, identity and integrity of HEIs are acknowledged and respected.

HEIs and QAAs can adapt the standards and guidelines to fit their own systems and contexts based on evidence that they produce.

SCOPE

The ASG-QA apply to all types of HEIs in Africa irrespective of the mode of study or place of delivery, including transnational and cross-border delivery. The ASG-QA address students through the whole cycle of their university life, thus referring always to both undergraduate and postgraduate students, unless otherwise stated. Moreover, when addressing the staff of HEIs, all staff, from academic, research, and administrative to technical/support staff are concerned, unless otherwise stated.

The ASG-QA should be applied in cognisance of existing qualifications frameworks and credit transfer and accumulation systems operational in the continent, since these also act as catalysts for the enhancement of transparency and mutual trust in the provision of higher education.

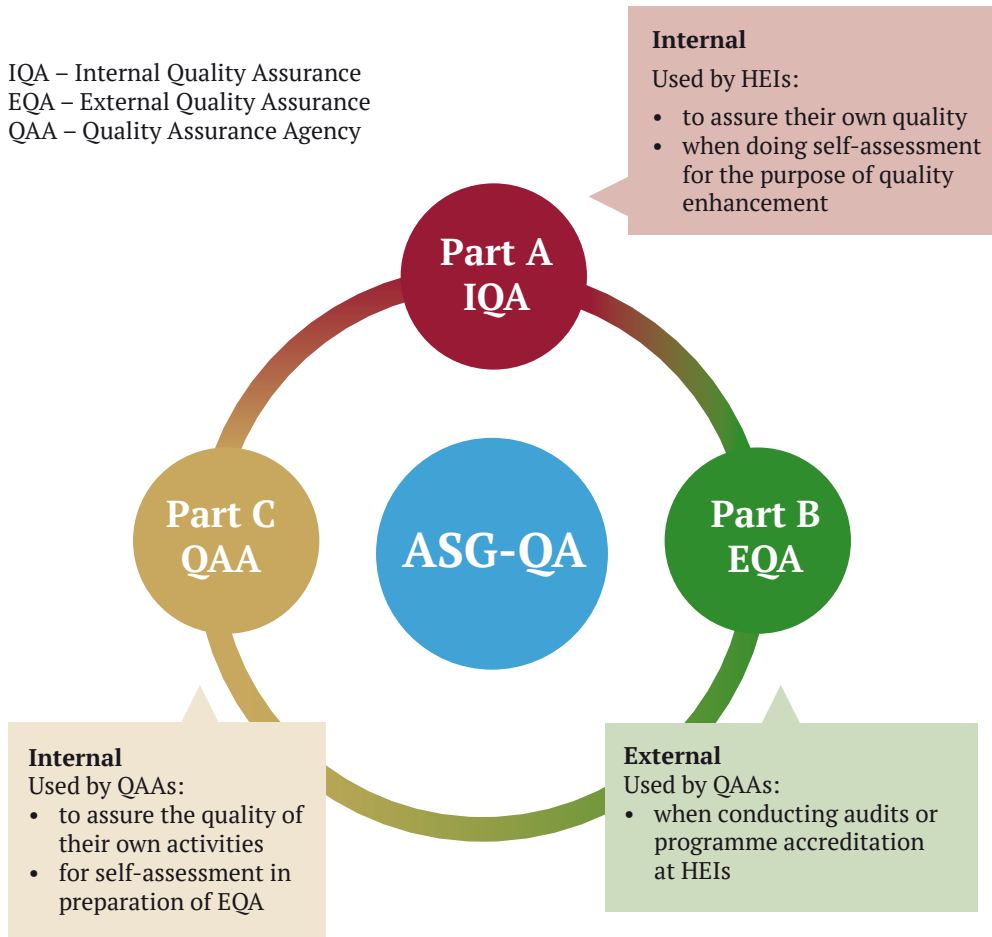
The standards and guidelines are presented in three Parts: Part A focuses on the internal quality assurance (IQA) of HEIs; Part B describes the standards and methodologies used for external quality assurance (EQA) of HEIs; and Part C focuses on the internal quality assurance of QAAs. The quality provision of open and distance learning (ODL) is incorporated into the IQA implemented by HEIs.

HEIs should develop their IQA systems according to Part A of the ASG-QA. The QAAs should undertake their quality assurance activities (Part C) in accordance with the standards and guidelines should articulated in Part B. QAAs should use the principles, practices and methodologies for EQA (Part B) when conducting quality assurance regardless of the approach (programme accreditation, institutional accreditation, quality audits, reviews) at HEIs. QAAs should also acknowledge the IQA standards and guidelines used by the institutions (Part A), and so ensure that the internal practices of the HEIs are directly relevant to any EQA that they undergo.

Consequently, the three parts of the ASG-QA should be seen as a whole as they are interlinked and, together, form the basis for an African QA framework. Figure 1 depicts the interlinkage of the three parts.

FIGURE 1: INTERLINKAGE OF THE THREE PARTS OF THE ASG-QA

IQA – Internal Quality Assurance
EQA – External Quality Assurance
QAA – Quality Assurance Agency



PART A: STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

INTRODUCTION

In line with the principle that HEIs have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and assurance thereof, Part A presents standards and guidelines for IQA at the level of the institutions, but also incorporates standards and guidelines for ODL modes. The standards and guidelines cover areas that are considered essential for the attainment of the provision of quality higher education, focusing mainly on: institutional governance, policies and processes that promote quality higher education; teaching and learning environment; research and innovation; collaboration and community engagement.

STANDARD 1. VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Standard

The institution shall have published vision and mission statements that reflect its commitment to continuous quality enhancement; strategic objectives and clear policies and procedures that are consistent with its vision and mission.

Guidelines

The institutional vision, mission and strategic objectives:

- a) Are publicly disclosed; reflect the aspirations and needs of stakeholders, and indicate strategic development plans and targets.
- b) Concerning QA, are translated into clear policies and strategic plans, which are operationalised into achievable goals.

The institution ensures that there is a robust and well-functioning QA system for its entire activities (academic, research and community engagement), and that facilitates the coordination of the approval of policies, procedures and mechanisms. The institution, therefore, ensures that:

- a) The vision and mission statements and strategic objectives reflect commitment to quality enhancement;

- b) Various forms of planning (for example, strategic, institutional, academic, and financial) are coordinated to ensure the quality of academic outcomes;
- c) Medium- and long-term plans reflect the programmes being offered, as well as its research focus to ensure sustainability and continuous improvement;
- d) The formulation of the plans is collegial, they promote a high degree of institutional integrity and responsiveness to change, and they are known to stakeholders; and
- e) There is continuous and periodic monitoring, evaluation and benchmarking of processes, including self-assessment of academic programmes and institutional self-assessment for purposes of continual improvement.

STANDARD 2. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Standard

The institution shall have clearly stated governance and management structures. This will ensure sound and ethical governance and management, including robust QA practices that support the achievement of its mission and legal mandate.

Guidelines

The institution:

- a) Has qualified, competent and experienced leadership to oversee the development and management of a quality culture within the institution;
- b) Has relevant governance and management bodies, such as the University Council, Senate, Management Board, Student Body; and various committees, each with a clear mandate, duties, responsibilities, powers, privileges and tenure; and these bodies are properly coordinated to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and quality;
- c) Has a QA policy and structure, which flow down through all levels;
- d) Has clear communication systems and networks for the promotion of internal and external information dissemination for public accountability;
- e) Makes responsible use of its autonomy;
- f) Has policies and procedures for the delegation of authority, whenever needed;
- g) Enables students to participate in decision-making in relevant governance bodies;
- h) Ensures regular consultations with stakeholders, reports and follows up actions on key issues of policy and operations to promote quality, cohesion, harmony and identity within the institution;
- i) Emphasises ethics, transparency, and academic integrity throughout its teaching, learning and research activities;

- j) Promotes a high degree of institutional integrity and responsiveness by advocating and demonstrating honesty and non-discrimination in its treatment of staff, students and members of the public and in the management of institutional affairs;
- k) Publishes and disseminates on a regular basis, impartial and objective qualitative and quantitative information about courses offered, research undertaken and community services;
- l) Has developed and implemented effective processes for deterring, detecting and dealing with misconduct by students or staff;
- m) Has policies and activated procedures to manage conflict of interest; and
- n) Has effective, systematic, timely and fair processes for the investigation of complaints, grievances and appeals by students, staff and other stakeholders.

STANDARD 3. HUMAN RESOURCES

Standard

The institution shall have policies on human resources that are inclusive, and that ensure recruitment and retention of adequate numbers of qualified and competent staff to achieve its mission and carry out its legal mandate.

Guidelines

The quality of staff is the key to the quality of the higher education institution and, therefore, it:

- a) Has clear policies and procedures that ensure equal opportunities and actual gender equality in human resources for recruitment, retention, and promotion of staff that is based on qualification, competence and skills;
- b) Has a core of full-time staff and keeps up-to-date records of staff numbers, qualifications and employment turnover rates;
- c) Has clear policies and procedures for continuous staff development;
- d) Has clear contractual agreements with staff that outline the conditions of employment and are aligned with any legislative requirements of the country of the institution;
- e) Provides adequate staff support facilities and services;
- f) Undertakes periodic monitoring, evaluation, and appraisal of staff; and
- g) Adheres to (local/regional) norms for student-faculty ratios that promote student-centred learning.

STANDARD 4. FINANCIAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Standard

The institution shall have adequate financial resources and prudent financial management that are aligned to its mission, objectives and mandate to ensure quality education.

Guidelines

Financial sustainability is the backbone of any institution, and adequate financial resources and prudent financial management should be conducted within an approved framework of institutional strategies, policies and procedures, which enable the institution to meet its financial needs to ensure quality academic outcomes. The institution has:

- a) Adequate financial resources to carry out its mandate and objectives effectively and efficiently;
- b) A diversified financial and sustainable resource base, and ensures a balanced allocation of resources to core functions of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement;
- c) A prudent financial management system, which includes strategies, policies and procedures for budgeting, resource allocation, repairs and maintenance of infrastructure, asset management, debt management and financial reporting;
- d) A system to address the risks, gaps and challenges identified for continuous improvement; and
- e) Monitoring, evaluation (through financial audits) and benchmarking processes for the financial management system using international best practices or some other basis of accounting appropriate for the institution.

STANDARD 5. INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

Standard

The institution shall have adequate and appropriate infrastructure, facilities and resources to support teaching, learning and research.

Guidelines

For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist students' learning.

Infrastructure and facilities are in line with the goals and aims of the higher education institution, the programmes on offer, the teaching and learning strategy, as well as research.

The institution has:

- a) Academic, administrative and recreational facilities (lecture theatres, seminar rooms, staff offices, laboratories, studios, workshops, etc.) adequate for the number of students and staff;
- b) A properly organised library equipped with facilities and resources (physical and/or electronic); adequate for the number of students and staff;
- c) Adequate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, including affordable, high speed and dedicated connectivity.
- d) Facilities that conform to appropriate national health and safety provisions; and
- e) Facilities accessible for persons with disabilities.

In the case of E-learning, the institution ensures:

- a) Sufficient infrastructure to address technical support in terms of:
 - i. Server space,
 - ii. Redundancy or load balancing,
 - iii. Technical help desk,
 - iv. Reliable internet access, and
 - v. Reliable technical services in terms of back-up and remote services; and
 - vi. Resources to develop the knowledge and skills of their ICT practitioners.
- b) That it has an ICT plan for purposes of:
 - i. Maintaining and upgrading of technologies; and
 - ii. Ensuring reliability, privacy, safety and security.
- c) That there is consistency and coherency of the technical framework for students and academic staff, which ensures that any change in technology is introduced in a way that minimises its impact on students and academic staff. Therefore, the institution has:
 - i. A clear structure for communicating changes in software programmes, hardware or technical system / procedure when a student or staff proceeds from one course to another,
 - ii. A training programme / process for both staff and students when new software or a new system is adopted,
 - iii. Access to training by off-campus or virtual students, and
 - iv. Learning policy on new software when a student or tutor proceeds from one course to another.
- d) That hardware, software and technical support are an important element of e-learning and, therefore, the institution has the following in place:
 - i. A help desk that operates 24 hours and 7 days a week,

3) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), (http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ESG_3edition-2.pdf), p.25-26.

- ii. A system for monitoring and supporting a range of hardware / software,
- iii. Clearly stated technical expectations,
- iv. A system for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), which should be assessed and feedback given to students.

STANDARD 6. STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSION, CERTIFICATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Standard

The institution shall have pre-defined, published and consistently applied policies and procedures that ensure fair and equitable recruitment and admission, progression, certification and support services through all phases of the student's lifecycle, and in issues concerning students' future employability.

The institution shall have documented policies and strategies that promote students' welfare and guidance in curricular, vocational and personal areas.

Guidelines

Providing conditions and support that are necessary for students to make progress in their academic career is in the best interests of the individual students, programmes and institutions. It is vital to have fit-for-purpose admission, recognition and completion procedures.

Therefore, the institution has clear guidelines and strategies:

- a) For marketing/promoting the institution and its programmes, recruitment, admission, selection and registration;
- b) That promote diversity in admission, including gender mainstreaming and consideration of disadvantaged groups and persons with disabilities, where applicable;
- c) That ensure that students admitted meet minimum general and programme-specific entry requirements;
- d) That ensure monitoring, evaluation and benchmarking for improvement of enrolment management;
- e) That guarantee continual collection and compilation of data on students' admission, progress and performance, and graduation rates;
- f) That promote student retention and progression, and address issues concerning drop-out rates;
- g) That ensure rigorous processes for issuance and storage of certificates; and
- h) That ensure storage of detailed records and transcripts, indicating the list of courses, units and grades.

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities) and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing learning resources and student support.

Support services may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are fit-for-purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

Students need guidance, and appropriate provision is made to advise and assist them in curricular, vocational and personal domains. Adequate provision is made for information and advice to potential students during the application and enrolment phases. The institution has guidelines for the promotion of students' learning by:

- a) Advising them on academic issues;
- b) Advising them on financial matters;
- c) Providing health and personal counselling services; and
- d) Providing career guidance.

The institution supports and develops appropriate strategies for the creation and functioning of cultural, artistic and sports facilities and associations.

STANDARD 7. DESIGN, APPROVAL, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF STUDY PROGRAMMES

Standard

The institution shall have policies and systems that ensure the design and development, monitoring and evaluation of quality, relevant study programmes that are learning outcomes-based and aligned with the needs of stakeholders; and that contribute to the achievement of its mission, and are commensurate with national, regional and international standards.

In the case of ODL, the provider shall have in place mechanisms for pre-testing or piloting the learning materials to ensure that they are at the learners' level and that the learners will be able to use them without difficulty.

Guidelines

The institution:

- a) Has policies, procedures and processes for introducing new programmes with learning outcomes and that are competence-based, and for amending or phasing out standing programmes and programmes are subject to continuous monitoring and evaluation (including periodic external review) and development to ensure currency, quality and relevance;
- b) Has academic programmes that are in line with its mission and objectives and address the expectations and needs of stakeholders; therefore, the programmes show range, depth, coherence, quality and relevance; are up to date and adequate in content and scope, promoting core content, ideas, values and the acquisition of employability skills, such as work-related learning/attachment/internship/traineeship;
- c) Ensures that programme structures and credit hours/units are in accord with international norms for the amount of study required for each qualification it offers (or for the level of the qualifications awarded); and that programmes are approved by the relevant national QAA and professional bodies, where applicable;
- d) Has effective mechanisms for stakeholder participation in curriculum design, review and validation, including feedback from students, alumni and employers;
- e) Has policies requiring formulated learning outcomes to be defined and documented for all programmes and courses, and ensures that the programme specifications are accessible to learners (or stakeholders);
- f) Has structures and procedures for the approval of programmes by relevant bodies, such as the Senate, and authorities such as professional bodies, if applicable;
- g) Has programmes that are delivered by adequate, qualified and competent staff with pedagogical skills;
- h) Has appropriate formal agreements for all programmes offered in partnership with other institutions, specifying in detail the roles and responsibilities of both partners, including teaching commitments and QA arrangements; and
- i) Ensures that the formulated learning outcomes are benchmarked against level descriptors of national or regional Qualifications Frameworks, as applicable.

In the case of ODL, the pre-testing of learning materials is essential for ensuring that the learners will be able to achieve the objectives or intended learning outcomes. The broad requirement of pretesting should be made available, for example:

- a) Students' understanding of the objectives;
- b) Language of presentation;
- c) Explanation of concepts, ideas and theories;
- d) Use of examples for illustration;
- e) Activities and practice exercises given, and feedback provided;
- f) Use of symbols or icons;
- g) Navigational devices for online materials;
- h) Motivate and sustain learners' interests; and
- i) Use didactic concepts in writing modules.

STANDARD 8. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Standard

The institution shall put in place, in a way that is consistent with its vision and mission, policies and procedures that promote learning and acquisition of appropriate knowledge, competencies and skills; and assure fair and transparent assessment based on student-centred assessment.

The assessment principles, standards and procedures are explicit and made available publicly to both students and staff.

Guidelines

Teaching and learning is one of the core activities of a higher education institution, and it is important that the academic staff and facilitators ensure quality student experience to enable the students to acquire appropriate knowledge, competences and skills.

The institution ensures that:

- a) The teaching, learning and assessment strategies are student-centred and flexible; motivate students' self-reflection and engagement in the learning process;
- b) The environment and resources are appropriate and adequate to support each student;
- c) There are systems in place for periodic monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the teaching and learning approaches for quality improvement; and
- d) There are mechanisms for students to provide feedback on their learning experience.

In the case of ODL:

- e) The decision on the medium or media of delivery should take into account the following:
 - i. Accessibility to the learners,
 - ii. Cost of using it, both by the institution at installation and maintenance, as well as learner cost,
 - iii. Teaching strengths in relation to specific content,
 - iv. Its capacity in creating inter-activity,
 - v. Organisational requirements for development,
 - vi. Its novelty, and
 - vii. Speed within which it can be set up.
- f) There are face-to-face sessions to provide general orientation and introduction to the course materials at the commencement of the course;
- g) There are special face-to-face sessions for difficult aspects of the course during the programme/course; and
- h) There are face-to-face sessions to provide some revision work to learners before examinations.

Student assessment is one of the most important elements of higher education because the outcomes of such assessment have a profound effect on students' progression and future careers. It is, therefore, important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times. This implies that:

- a) The assessment and procedures are published and consistently applied, and include:
 - i. A range of assessment methods (e.g. coursework, projects, research, dissertation and examinations to serve formative and summative assessment purposes),
 - ii. Internal and external moderation,
 - iii. Invigilation procedures,
 - iv. Monitoring of student progress,
 - v. Validity and reliability of assessment practices,
 - vi. Recording of assessment results and settling of disputes, and
 - vii. Rigour and security of assessment system;
- b) Assessment standards are spelled out for each programme and are competence- or outcomes-based, where applicable;
- c) Assessment is carried out by competent and impartial examiners;
- d) Integrity of examinations and award of degrees are ensured to guard against examination malpractice;
- e) There are regular objective feedback to students on their strengths and weaknesses, and appropriate counselling support for improvement;
- f) There is a disciplinary and appeals process for students who may feel aggrieved; and
- g) There is a QA handbook, which is known to staff and students.

STANDARD 9. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Standard

The institution shall encourage, promote, and engage in innovative research consistent with its policies and strategic plans, and address national, regional, continental, and international needs. The institution shall encourage innovation in its teaching, learning and research.

The institution shall ensure that the management of postgraduate studies is conducted within an approved framework of institutional policies and plans that ensure quality ethical research.

Guidelines

Research is one of the core activities of a higher education institution, and the institution therefore requires an institution-wide research policy that sets the direction of its research. The policy is at both institutional and research-programme level (postgraduate studies) to ensure proper engagement in research. The institution ensures that:

- a) There is a shared understanding of the nature, role and goals of research;
- b) There are standards, procedures and processes for the approval of research proposals, and theses, and the conduct and supervision of research studies;
- c) There are policies, research management systems and strategies, adequate infrastructure and resources that facilitate all staff to undertake innovative research, and publish research results;
- d) There are standards and processes for the approval of research proposals and theses, in line with the research needs of the national or regional context, and capacity building possibilities for researchers, management of research partnerships and research contracts, handling of intellectual property and commercialisation of research, and effective and trustworthy management of research information;
- e) There is adequate academic integrity through the establishment and use of appropriate research committees and boards to ensure academic integrity;
- f) The research undertaken is relevant and responsive to the needs for academic advancement and community development expectations; and
- g) There is effective monitoring and evaluation of the research system.

STANDARD 10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Standard

The institution shall encourage engagement in community outreach programmes as part of its social responsibility.

Guidelines

A higher education institution is not only responsible for teaching, learning and research, but also for serving society. The institution ensures that community engagement activities are conducted within institutional policies and strategies that facilitate collaboration between the institution and its larger communities (local, national, regional, continental and global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

For the benefit of the students, institution, and society, the institution incorporates community engagement in its activities, with the objective of:

- a) Enriching scholarship, research, and creative activities;
- b) Enhancing teaching and learning;
- c) Facilitating preparation of educated and engaged citizens;
- d) Strengthening democratic values and civic responsibility in students;
- e) Addressing critical societal issues and contribute to public good.

The institution should ensure that there are mechanisms for partnering with other stakeholders in the community for sustainable development.

STANDARD 11. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Standard

The institution shall ensure that it collects, analyses, and makes use of relevant information for the effective management of its programmes of study and other activities.

Guidelines

Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making and for understanding what is working and what challenges need to be addressed. Effective processes for collecting and analysing information about academic programmes and other activities of the institution feed into the internal QA system.

The information gathered will depend on the vision and mission of the institution. However, the following points are important to address:

- a) Key performance indicators;

- b) Profile of student population (including gender);
- c) Learning resources and available student services;
- d) Student progression, drop-out rates, and graduation rates;
- e) Satisfaction of students and alumni with programmes and teaching provided;
and
- f) Career paths for students.

It is important that both students and staff are involved in analysis and follow-up activities to address the shortcomings.

STANDARD 12. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Standard

The institution shall publish information about its activities, including programmes, in a clear, accurate and objective manner; and ensure that the information is up-to-date and accessible.

The institution shall ensure that promotion of its programmes is carried out in a fair and ethical manner, following acceptable best practices, and comply with all relevant legislation.

Guidelines

Information about the institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, alumni and other stakeholders, and the public. The information includes programmes offered, selection criteria, expected learning outcomes, qualifications they award, teaching and learning procedures, graduation rates, learning opportunities, and information about the employment of its graduates. The institution and departments ensure that:

- a) Promotional materials give a clear and accurate view of the programme, its provision, objectives and outcomes, including:
 - i. Identification of the programme,
 - ii. The body awarding the qualification and its accreditation status;
 - iii. Mode of delivery,
 - iv. Level of the programme on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), where applicable,
 - v. Charges involved,
 - vi. Terms and conditions relevant to the programme,
 - vii. Conditions for withdrawal from the programme,
 - viii. Financial agreements with the provider; and
 - ix. Rights, obligations and commitments expected of the student.

- b) Students are fully informed of the issues that affect them with respect to the management of the programme, such as:
- i. Language of communication,
 - ii. Required access to technologies, in the case of ODL,
 - iii. Technical competencies of students required to enrol in the programme, in the case of ODL,
 - iv. Timeframe in which the programmes are offered and nature of learning outcomes,
 - v. Required texts and access to reference materials,
 - vi. Understanding of independent learning expectations,
 - vii. Schedule for face-to-face interactions, in the case of ODL,
 - viii. Schedule for examinations,
 - ix. Schedule for submission of assignments, and
 - x. Collection of certificates.

STANDARD 13. COLLABORATION, STAFF AND STUDENT MOBILITY

Standard

The institution shall have mechanisms that promote collaboration with other HEIs, professional bodies, research institutions and relevant social actors at national, regional, continental and international levels and to facilitate mobility of students and staff.

Guidelines

The institution has policies that promote the mobility of academic staff, researchers and students in the programme, internationally. The degree-awarding institution ensures appropriate and high quality delivery of programmes at the partner institution. The collaborating institutions:

- a) Ensure that programmes under collaboration are of the required standard and rigour as those of the parent institution;
- b) Ensure that students benefit from the same standard of resources as those for the regular students of the awarding institution;
- c) Take the responsibility to assure the quality of the educational provision under collaboration;
- d) Ensure that the collaborating institutions are approved by the relevant QAA/ professional body and are subject to periodic quality audits; and
- e) Ensure that students are fully informed of the nature of the collaboration between the institutions concerned.

If the programme is offered via collaborative arrangements, the provider clearly defines the rights and responsibilities of parties, legal ownership, accreditation status of the programme, and resources available for the programme.

PART B: STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

INTRODUCTION

It is important that HEIs subject themselves to periodic external assessment for purposes of accountability and quality enhancement of their provisions. Part B describes the methodologies (or standards) used for external quality assurance (EQA) of HEIs. This section takes into account the standards and guidelines in Part A (IQA) for HEIs, ensures that IQA examined is relevant to and efficient for the concerned higher education institution, and that there is consistency between internal quality assurance undertaken by institutions themselves and external quality assurance. This section covers objectives of EQA, designing mechanisms that are fit for purpose, independence, decisions and reporting, periodic review, and complaints and appeals.

STANDARD 1. OBJECTIVES OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONSIDERATION FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard

External quality assurance shall ensure that the higher education institution has clearly articulated vision and mission statements, and it shall help the institution ensure the effectiveness of its internal QA mechanisms, providing an additional instrument for assessing institutional quality.

Guidelines

External quality assurance is based on the institution's responsibility for the quality of their academic programmes and other provisions and, therefore, it is important that external quality assurance recognises and supports the institutional responsibility for its QA. EQA complements an effective IQA system and, therefore, assists the higher education institution to:

- a) Appreciate the link between IQA and EQA;
- b) Adhere to established QA principles, standards and guidelines in the higher education sector;
- c) Develop and entrench an institutional quality culture by establishing mechanisms for continuous quality improvement / enhancement;

- d) Provide a basis to benchmark inputs, processes and outputs with other HEIs nationally, regionally and internationally;
- e) Determine the institution's capacity to offer academic programmes;
- f) Assess institutional compliance with legal and other requirements;
- g) Provide independent evidentiary information to its stakeholders, the general public and international community that it is offering quality higher education; and
- h) Be recognised and accepted nationally, regionally, continentally and internationally.

STANDARD 2. DESIGNING EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard

Standards, guidelines and processes for external quality assurance shall be designed to be fit for purpose, defined to achieve the intended aims and objectives of EQA, and to strengthen IQA systems at institutions.

Guidelines

It is necessary that standards, guidelines, and processes developed and implemented by QAAs and the institutions are created in consultation with stakeholders in order to address all academic activities of the higher education system and for acceptability. The standards include:

- a) Standards and guidelines for periodic / cyclical programme accreditation / evaluation / assessment / audit; and/or
- b) Standards and guidelines for periodic / cyclical institutional accreditation / evaluation / assessment / audit.

STANDARD 3. IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard

The standards, processes, and procedures for EQA shall be pre-defined, reliable, published, and consistently implemented for purposes of accountability.

Guidelines

External quality assurance is carried out professionally, consistently and transparently to ensure that it is acceptable to the higher education institution. EQA is carried out on the basis of the self-assessment prepared by the institution. The processes for EQA include the following activities:

- a) Self-assessment by the institution and production of the SAR/SER;

- b) External assessment of the institution through the SAR/SER, site visit to the institution and interviews with stakeholders of the institution, and documentary evidence to support institutional claims;
- c) Oral report to the management of the institution before the review panel leaves the institution;
- d) Preliminary report provided to the institution before the final report is produced;
- e) Final report of the external review; and
- f) Follow-up activity to ensure that recommendations raised in the final report are addressed.

STANDARD 4. INDEPENDENCE OF EVALUATION

Standard

EQA shall be carried out by panels of external experts drawn from a wide range of expertise and experience.

Guidelines

The principle of best practices of external quality assurance is based on the consistent use of a wide range of expertise and experiences:

- a) Experts are drawn from academics, employers or professional practitioners, and students;
- b) To ensure professionalism, consistency and transparency of output of experts, it is necessary that they:
 - i. Are carefully selected,
 - ii. Have appropriate skills and are competent to perform tasks assigned to them,
 - iii. Are adequately inducted into EQA principles and procedures before undertaking the external review,
 - iv. Are independent in their judgements about the quality of the programme or institutions,
 - v. Have no conflict of interest with the institution or programme they are evaluating, and
 - vi. Sign a Declaration of Independence and No Conflict of Interest Form
- c) In the case of possible conflicts of interest, the institution is given the opportunity to object to any member of the proposed review panel; and
- d) Involvement of international experts is considered a good practice in EQA.

STANDARD 5. DECISION AND REPORTING OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OUTCOMES

Standard

Reports and decisions made as a result of external quality assurance shall be clear, based on published standards, processes and procedures, and made accessible, for purposes of accountability.

Guidelines

The decisions of external quality assurance have a significant impact on institutions and programmes that are evaluated, assessed or judged. It is critical that:

- a) External quality assessment decisions are published without undermining the integrity of the review process;
- b) The EQA reports are the basis for follow-up actions, hence they are clear, precise and include:
 - i. Purpose of the review,
 - ii. Context description (of higher education institution),
 - iii. Description of procedures, including experts involved,
 - iv. Evidence, analysis and findings,
 - v. Commendations/examples of good practice of the institution,
 - vi. Conclusions,
 - vii. Recommendations for follow-up actions;
- c) The institution is given an opportunity to point out factual errors to ensure the accuracy of the report;
- d) The institution is the first to receive the EQA report in the interest of transparency and fairness, prior to distribution to other parties;
- e) The decisions taken by the responsible body are not subject to external influences; and
- f) The decisions are in a format that has been made known to the institution concerned (for example, commendations, recommendations, and formal decisions).

STANDARD 6. PERIODIC REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMMES

Standard

External quality assurance of institutions and programmes shall be undertaken on a cyclical basis.

Guidelines

The length of the review cycle is clearly defined and published:

- a) For academic programmes, the review cycle is consistent with the duration of the programme, or it reflects the defined validity of the accreditation period;
- b) Depending on the context of the QA system, for institutions, the cyclical institutional review is carried out preferably every five years; and
- c) Every cyclical review results in a report of general findings of the review.

STANDARD 7. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard

The procedure for lodging complaints and appeals shall be clearly defined and communicated to the institution concerned.

Guidelines

In order to safeguard the rights of the institution and ensure fairness in the decision-making process, it is important that the institution has access to the processes that allow it to raise issues of concern with the agencies if it can demonstrate that the outcome of the external review is not based on sound evidence. It is, therefore, critical that:

- a) There is an established appeals system;
- b) The institution is allowed to raise issues of concern consistent with the appeals system;
- c) There is a procedure for addressing complaints raised by the general public;
- d) There are clearly defined complaints and appeals processes and procedures, which are consistently applied; and
- e) Appeals and complaints are handled professionally, within an agreed period of time.

PART C: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

INTRODUCTION

Part C of the ASG-QA is for the purpose of internal quality assurance of QAAs through self-assessment of its policies, practices, procedures and activities and/or for external assessment/evaluation by another body/peer organisation. This section covers policies, processes and activities of the QAA, legal status, vision and mission, financial and human resources, independence, and standards and processes used by the QAA.

STANDARD 1. LEGAL STATUS

Standard

The QAA shall be an autonomous legal entity with clearly defined mandate, scope and powers. It will be recognised as a quality assurance agency at a national/regional level.

Guidelines

When external quality assurance is carried out for regulatory purposes, institutions have the security that the outcomes of the process are accepted within the higher education system, the stakeholders and the public. The QAA is established by a competent authority

The QAA's legal mandate specifies, among others, its:

- a) Establishment by an appropriate legal instrument such as an Act or Statutes;
- b) Functions and responsibilities, including the scope of quality assurance activities;

STANDARD 2. VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

Standard

The QAA shall have written and published vision and mission statements or objectives taking the higher education context into account.

Guidelines

The vision, mission and objectives show that:

- a) Quality assurance is a major activity of the agency;
- b) There is a systematic approach to achieving the vision, mission and objectives of the QAA;
- c) The objectives are implemented in line with a practical management plan that is linked to the agency's resources; and
- d) The custodianship and oversight of vision and mission are appropriate for the mandate and objectives of the agency.

STANDARD 3. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Standard

The QAA shall have clearly defined structures that ensure sound and ethical governance and management, including good practices of quality assurance that support its mission and legal mandate.

Guidelines

The QAA:

- a) Has qualified and experienced leadership to oversee the development and management of best practices in quality assurance in higher education;
- b) Has relevant governance bodies, such as the governing board and various committees, each with a clear mandate, powers, responsibilities and tenure; which are well coordinated to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of its vision, mission and strategic objectives;
- c) Has procedures for the appointment of the governing board and the Chief Executive;
- d) Has policies and procedures for financial and management decisions;
- e) Has clear communication system of its activities for disseminating information for public accountability;
- f) Ensures regular consultation with stakeholders, and follow-up actions on key issues of policy and operations;
- g) Promotes a high degree of institutional integrity and responsiveness in the management of institutional affairs by advocating and demonstrating honesty and non-discrimination in the treatment of its staff and members of the public;

- h) Has effective processes for deterring, detecting and dealing with misconduct by staff; and
- i) Has effective, systematic, timely and fair processes for the investigation of complaints, grievances and appeals by staff.

STANDARD 4. INDEPENDENCE OF QAA

Standard

The QAA shall be independent in its operations, outcomes, judgements and decisions.

Guidelines

The QAA makes independent decisions and judgements that are not subject to change by third parties. Independence of an agency includes the following:

- a) **Organisational independence** demonstrated by official documentation, such as legislative acts or statutes and instruments of governance that stipulate the independence of the agency's work from third parties (e.g. HEIs, governments, other stakeholders);
- b) **Operational independence**: the definitions and operations of the agency's procedures and methods, nomination and appointment of qualified external experts (including the provision of no objection); and
- c) **Independence of formal outcomes**: the final decision of quality assurance activities remains the responsibility of the QAA.

STANDARD 5. POLICIES, PROCESSES AND ACTIVITIES

Standard

The QAA shall undertake its quality assurance activities in accordance with the standards and guidelines articulated in Part B of the ASG-QA.

Guidelines

It is important that HEIs trust QAAs; the agencies are transparent, and describe and publish their objectives and activities, scope of work, expertise; and interaction with HEIs and other stakeholders.

The external quality assurance standards and processes are appropriate for the core activities of an institution or programme. These include:

- a) Teaching and learning, research and community work/engagement;
- b) Resources such as finances, staff, and learning resources;
- c) Specific areas such as levels of achievement, relative benchmarking and types of measures, and general guidelines; and
- d) Specific learning outcomes.

In order to carry out its core function of external quality assurance, the QAA conducts institutional audits/accreditation and programme accreditation/reviews on a regular basis, and provides in advance the framework to the concerned institution. To ensure transparency, the QAA's review/assessment processes include:

- a) Validation of the institution's self-assessment against the agency's standards and processes;
- b) Appointment of an external peer review panel comprising subject matter specialists and experts in higher education QA matters;
- c) Site visit by the review panel and interviews with various staff members and stakeholders of the institution;
- d) Oral report before the review panel leaves the institution;
- e) Preliminary report presented to the institution for factual corrections;
- f) Final report of external review to the institution; and
- g) Follow-up activity of recommendations raised in the final report.

STANDARD 6. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard

The QAA shall have in place policies and processes for its own internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of its activities.

Guidelines

The QAA is accountable to its stakeholders and observes high professional standards and integrity by adhering to its guiding and ethical principles, and makes available internal quality assurance policies, standards, processes and procedures on its website. The QAA's decisions are impartial, rigorous, thorough, fair and consistent, even if the judgements are made by different panels. The policies, therefore, ensure:

- a) Objectivity and fairness in all its judgements, decisions and conclusions;
- b) Standards and guidelines for external quality assurance for HEIs are of a general nature, not prescriptive and do not interfere with institutions' autonomy but help to guarantee all stakeholders and the international community of overall professionalism, visibility, transparency, credibility, integrity, and public accountability in the higher education sub-sector;
- c) Contribution to established national, regional, continental and international mechanisms for integrity, transparency and public accountability; and
- d) Professionalism and public acceptance:
 - i. All persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically,
 - ii. Timely internal and external feedback mechanisms lead to continuous improvement within the agency,
 - iii. Guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination,

- iv. Outlines the appropriate communication with relevant authorities in those jurisdictions in which they operate, and
- v. Any activity carried out and materials produced by consultants are in line with its standards and guidelines and those of the ASG-QA.

The QAA ensures that standards and processes used for external quality assurance are pre-determined, pre-defined, published and made available to institutions ahead of external quality assurance procedures. The QAA ensures that:

- a) The standards and processes used to ensure quality and relevance of HEIs, such as institutional or programme self-assessment and quality assurance procedures, have appropriate follow-up mechanisms for recommendations and actions for further improvement.
- b) There is thematic analysis (production of a summary of reports), carried out from time to time, which describes and analyses the general trends in the findings of external reviews, assessments as well as evaluations of institutions and their programmes for possible policy direction.

STANDARD 7. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Standard

The QAA shall have adequate and appropriate human, financial and material resources to carry out its QA mandate effectively and efficiently.

Guidelines

The QAA is adequately funded to realise its vision, mission and objectives to:

- a) Ensure it has adequate facilities commensurate with its QA activities;
- b) Recruit adequate and qualified human resources, to carry out its QA activities; cognisant of gender, disadvantaged groups and persons with disabilities;
- c) Carry out its external QA mandate professionally, effectively and efficiently;
- d) Ensure improvement of its practices and development; and
- e) Inform the public about its activities and results/outcomes.

STANDARD 8. BENCHMARKING, NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

Standard

The QAA shall promote and participate in international initiatives, workshops and conferences, and collaborate with relevant bodies on QA to exchange and share experiences and best practices.

Guidelines

It is important that the QAA remains relevant in its activities. The QAA:

- a) Collaborates with all relevant bodies, such as professional bodies, for QA and accreditation;
- b) Shares accurate, reliable and easily accessible information about standards for registration/licensing and QA of all modes of education delivery;
- c) Contributes to the development and/or updating of the appropriate regional, continental and other international conventions on the recognition of courses and qualifications, and serves as national or regional information centres as appropriate;
- d) Participates in bilateral or multilateral agreements for facilitating the recognition or determination of equivalences of each country's qualifications based on the procedures and standards included in established international agreements for recognition of courses and qualifications; and
- e) Contributes to regional, continental and international efforts to improve the accessibility of up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive information about recognised HEIs or providers.

STANDARD 9. PERIODIC REVIEW OF QAAS

Standard

The QAA shall undergo periodic internal and external reviews for continuous improvement.

Guidelines

The QAA has a system for continuous QA of its own practices and activities that emphasises flexibility in response to the changing nature of higher education, effectiveness of its operations, and its contribution towards the achievement of its objectives. The QAA, therefore:

- a) Conducts a comprehensive internal self-assessment of its processes, practices and activities periodically, including data analysis;
- b) Subjects itself to periodic external review on the basis of self-assessment by regional, continental or international QA bodies; and
- c) Ensures that required recommendations are disclosed and implemented for improvement; and
- d) Depending on the context of the QA system, for QAAs, the cyclical review is carried out preferably every five years.

ANNEX 1 – DRAFTING PROCESS OF THE ASG-QA

HAQAA Initiative:

The ASG-QA was developed in the framework of the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative. The Initiative was a service contract between December 2015 and November 2018 to support the development of a harmonised quality assurance and accreditation system at institutional, national, regional and pan-African continental levels, and funded by the European Union “Harmonisation, Quality and Accreditation” initiative (EC EAC/37/2014).

Technical Working Group:

The Technical Working Group (TWG) consisted of experts in the quality assurance of higher education from different regions: Western, Eastern, Southern, Northern and Central Africa. The group included one expert from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the work of the group was coordinated by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the Association of African Universities (AAU).

Drafting process:

The draft ASG-QA were based on the existing standards and guidelines of higher education already in use in African countries and by regional quality assurance networks or associations such as the Inter University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Association of Arab Universities (AARU), Southern African Regional University Association (SARUA) and Conseil Africain et Malagache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES). Additionally, the ASG-QA were benchmarked with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and other international standards and guidelines. The TWG worked on the draft in several face-to-face meetings and a great deal of drafting was carried out by the Chair and individual group members in between meetings.

Consultation:

Mainly through the dissemination channels of the AAU, a consultation survey on the draft ASG-QA was disseminated to all major stakeholders: HEIs, QAAs and ministries and governing bodies of higher education in Africa, for their input and comments. Feedback was also received from AAU and the African Union Commission (AUC). The draft and the survey was available in English, French, Arabic and Portuguese. All feedback was considered comprehensively, language by language.

Alongside the consultation process, to raise awareness, the draft was presented at several international conferences such as the International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa (ICQAHEA) conferences in 2016 and 2017 and the AAU 50th Anniversary conference in June 2017. The draft was also discussed and feedback gathered at the Training Course module of the HAQAA Initiative that brought together quality assurance experts from across the continent. Furthermore, the Advisory Board of the HAQAA Initiative, involving representatives from different regions of the continent, provided its support and feedback throughout the process.

ANNEX 2 - KEY TERMS

Accreditation: A process for verifying or approving a higher education institution or quality assurance agency by an authorised external organisation, normally valid for a limited period of time.

African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA): The expectations developed within the framework of the HAQAA Initiative for quality assurance in higher education across Africa.

Agency: (National) quality assurance agency for higher education.

Expert: See 'external reviewer'.

External quality assurance: Systematic monitoring and evaluation of the operations of a quality assurance agency of higher education, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards set out in the ASG-QA are met.

External review: A thorough evaluation conducted at a quality assurance agency of higher education by a qualified team of people that are not employed at the agency.

External review report: The main output of the review of a higher education institution or an agency in form of a document reporting in detail on the review, prepared by the Review Panel.

Higher education institution (HEI): University, college or other organisation that delivers higher education.

External reviewer: An individual contracted to the team that reviews the higher education institution or agency under review. He/she should have some experience in the higher education sector/quality assurance.

Guideline: Guidelines describe how standards linked to them may be achieved.

Internal quality assurance: A system and standardised procedures at a higher education institution or a quality assurance agency securing fit-for-purpose and quality outputs of processes.

Quality assurance: A general term for procedures in internal or external quality assurance procedures including accreditation, evaluation, audit both on programme and institutional levels and also concerning quality assurance agencies.

Review Panel: A group of individuals contracted to carry out an external review.

Self-assessment (report) (SAR): An analytical report prepared by a higher education institution or an agency under review, assessing its own performance, to be used as main piece of evidence for the Review Panel.

Site-visit: Normally a two to four day visit of the Review Panel to the premises of a higher education institution or quality assurance agency under review to gather further information about the operations of the institution or agency, and to cross-check existing information. The main part of the visit consists of interviews of the groups of all important individuals and stakeholders (i.e. agency leadership and staff, external reviewers of the agency, representatives of higher education institutions, government representatives).

Standard: Refers to the specification of aspects, elements or principles to which an institution, programme, higher education institution or quality assurance agency should conform or by which quality is judged.

ANNEX 3 - GLOSSARY

AARU - Association of Arab Universities

AAU – Association of African Universities

ASG-QA – African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

AU – African Union

AUC - African Union Commission

CAMES - Conseil Africain et Malagache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur

CESA - The Continental Education Strategy for Africa

ESG - Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

EU – European Union

EQA – External quality assurance

FAQs – Frequently asked questions

HAQAA Initiative - The Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Initiative

HEIs – Higher education institutions

ICQAHEA - International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa

ICT - Information and communication technology

IQA – Internal quality assurance

IUCEA - The Inter University Council of East Africa

NQF - National Qualifications Framework

ODL - Open and distance learning

PAQAF - Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework

QA – Quality Assurance

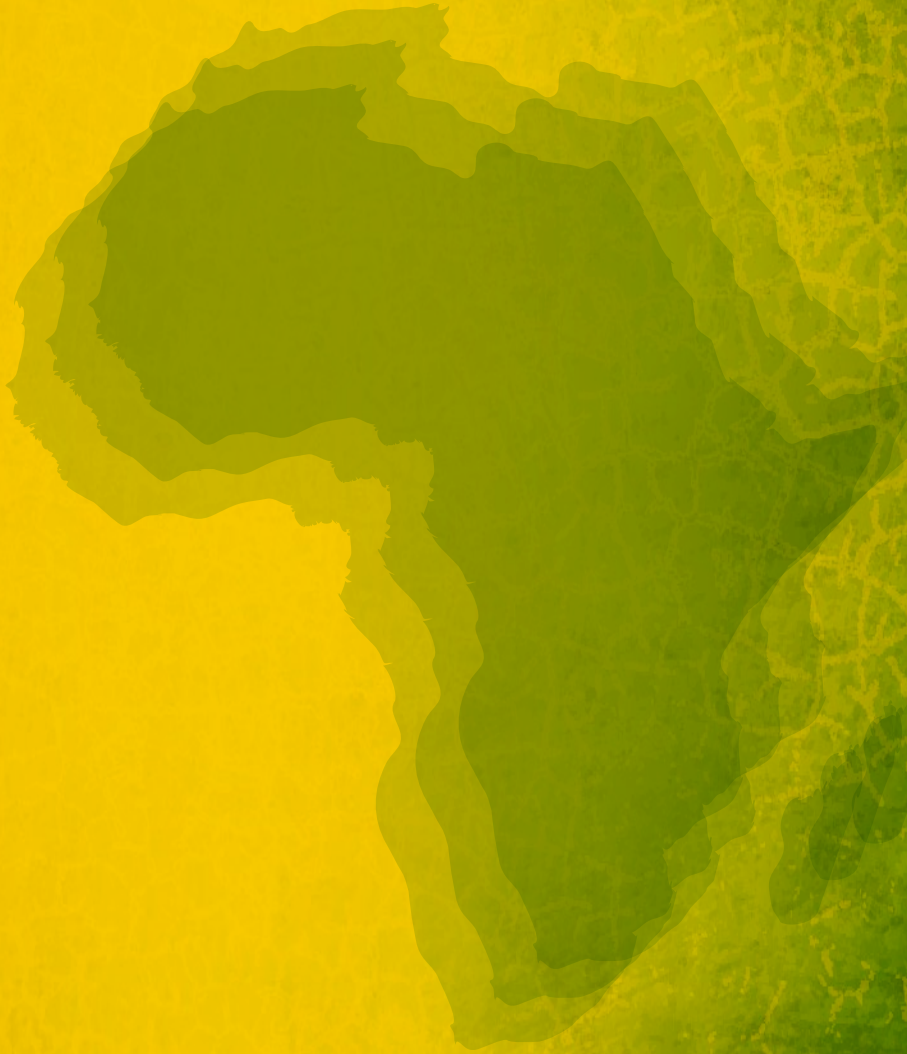
QAA – Quality assurance agency

SAR – Self-assessment report

SADC - Southern African Development Community

SARUA – Southern African Regional University Association

TWG – Technical Working Group



This initiative is implemented on behalf of the European and African Union Commissions by:

