

THE ACCREDITATION, CERTIFICATION AND
QUALITY ASSURANCE INSTITUTE

ACQUIN

AWARDS THE SEAL OF APPROVAL



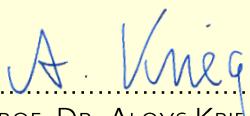
FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSE

LEADERS OF CHANGE: A NEW LOOK AT MODERN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT
(TRAINING OF FUTURE LEADERS)

AT THE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE,
NAZARBAYEV INTELLECTUAL SCHOOLS
ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN

THE CERTIFICATION IS VALID UNTIL 30TH OF SEPTEMBER 2031.

BAYREUTH, 01 DECEMBER 2025

.....

PROF. DR. ALOYS KRIEG
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

N. 34800820-250211-0

ACQUIN is a member of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)
since 2009

Certification report

International Certification of

Center of Excellence of the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools

Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan

Professional Development Course

“Leaders of Change: A New Look at Modern School Management

(Training of Future Leaders)”

I Procedure

Date of contract: 25 June 2025

Date of the submission of self-assessment report: 01 August 2025

Date of site visit: 09 - 10 October 2025

Attendance by ACQUIN office: Dr. Lyazzat Nugumanova; Kristina Beckermann

Certification decision: 01 December 2025

Peer review experts:

- **Prof. Dr. Marcus Pietsch**, Professorship for Educational Science, Educational Management and Quality Development, Institute of Educational Sciences, Leuphana University of Lüneburg
- **PhD Bayan Sapargaliyeva**, Postdoctoral Researcher, Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University (Almaty)
- **Dr. Moritz Dier**, Teacher, Quality Assurance Representative, State Technical School of Bayreuth
- **Elisa Garcia Knief**, Master of Education (Spanish and English, secondary school), Leibniz University Hannover

The **Assessment Report** of the peer-review experts is **based on** the self-assessment report of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) and extensive discussions with the HEI management, deans and/or heads of the departments, heads of study programme(s), lecturers, staff representatives, students, and alumni.

The basis of the **Assessment Criteria** is part 1 of the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) in the current official version. At the same time the national context, particularly the national regulations regarding the establishment of study programmes, are taken into account.

Content

I	Procedure	1
II	Introduction	5
1	Short profile of HEI	5
2	General information of the professional development course	7
III	Implementation and assessment of the criteria	8
1	ESG Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance	8
1.1	Implementation	8
1.2	Assessment	9
1.3	Conclusion	9
2	ESG Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes	9
2.1	Implementation	10
2.2	Assessment	13
2.3	Conclusion	14
3	ESG Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment	15
3.1	Implementation	15
3.2	Assessment	16
3.3	Conclusion	17
4	ESG Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification	18
4.1	Implementation	18
4.2	Assessment	19
4.3	Conclusion	19
5	ESG Standard 1.5: Teaching staff	19
5.1	Implementation	19
5.2	Assessment	20
5.3	Conclusion	22
6	ESG Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support	23
6.1	Implementation	23
6.2	Assessment	24
6.3	Conclusion	26
7	ESG Standard 1.7: Information management	26
7.1	Implementation	26
7.2	Assessment	27
7.3	Conclusion	29
8	ESG Standard 1.8: Public information	29
8.1	Implementation	29
8.2	Assessment	29
8.3	Conclusion	30
9	ESG Standard 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	30
9.1	Implementation	30

9.2	Assessment	31
9.3	Conclusion.....	32
10	ESG Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance.....	32
10.1	Implementation	32
10.2	Assessment	33
10.3	Conclusion.....	33
IV	Recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN	34
1	Assessment of compliance the Standards and Guidelines in the Higher European Area (ESG) in the actual official version and the German Council of Science and Humanities (WR)	34
2	Certification Recommendation	36
V	Decisions of the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN.....	37

II Introduction

The experts would like to thank the representatives of the Center of Excellence as well as students that they have taken part in the discussions and willingly shared information and their views during the site visit. The discussions are valuable not only for the assessment of the institution, but also for a better understanding of the legal and sociocultural context of the local higher education system.

Evaluation basis for the peer-review experts is the self-assessment report of the Center of Excellence as well as intensive discussions during the site visit with the HEI management, deans and/or heads of the departments, heads of the study programmes, study programmes coordinators, teachers, lecturers, administrative staff, students, and graduates.

Main objective of the accreditation procedure is to assess the quality of the study programmes and compliance with the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG). The ESG standards are applied as main assessment criteria in the international accreditation procedure. In addition, the respective country-specific criteria and standards are taken into account.

A group of experts was set up, which ensured that all areas relevant to the accreditation procedure (e.g. legal, structural, social etc. aspects) as well as the ESG are considered. The peer-review experts include professors, representatives of the professional practice and the student representative. A certificate with the ACQUIN seal is awarded upon accreditation of the study programmes.

1 **Short profile of HEI**

Center of Excellence (CoE) was established on 15 June 2011 by order of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, N. A. Nazarbayev, as part of the implementation of state policy aimed at modernising the system of professional development for teaching staff. It was registered on 23 August 2011. Its creation was based on the government's approval of the conceptual framework for the professional development of teachers, which provides for a systematic and tiered approach.

According to its Charter, the main objective of the CoE is to transfer the experience of the AEO "NIS" into educational practice and to improve the professional level of teachers through the implementation of additional education programmes.

CoE carries out 18 types of activities, including the development and delivery of professional development courses, post-course support, evaluation of the effectiveness of educational programmes, publication of teaching materials, organisation of conferences and seminars, as well as expert and consulting work.

The organisational structure of the CoE includes a central office in Astana and 15 branches located in regional centres and cities of republican significance. All branches operate on the basis of a unified educational policy, methodological approaches and coordination from the central office.

2 General information of the professional development course

Date of introduction	January 2024
Subject Area	Administration and Management
Standard period of study (hours)	440 academic hours, including 60 academic hours of practical training
Frequency of the programme offered	Once a year
Number of students currently enrolled	800
Average number of graduates per year	350-400
Target group(s)	School educators applying for the personnel reserve
Admission requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher or postgraduate pedagogical, education. - Teaching experience of at least three years. - Qualification – expert teacher and higher.
Form of study	Full-time, blended learning
Tuition fee	Financing at the expense of the CoE's founder –Autonomous Educational Organisation "Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools".

III Implementation and assessment of the criteria

1 ESG Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

1.1 Implementation

As stated in the self-report the “Center of Excellence” (CoE) integrates its quality assurance policy as an essential element of strategic management and institutional development. This activity is governed by the Quality Assurance Policy, approved in 2018 and publicly available on the official website of the CoE. According to the institution the policy has been developed in accordance with national regulatory requirements and international quality standards in the field of additional professional education.

CoE’s quality policy applies to all educational and managerial activities, integrating both academic and administrative processes. Quality assurance processes are coordinated by CoE departments, including: the analytical group, the educational programmes department, the information technology department, the methodological work department, and the administrative and legal support department.

A collegial body, the “Scientific and Methodological Council”, also plays an important role in ensuring the quality of developing professional development programmes. Its activities are regulated by the Regulations on the Scientific and Methodological Council.

As stated in the self-report, academic integrity is ensured through a set of organisational, methodological and ethical mechanisms aimed at fostering a culture of professional responsibility and respect for knowledge.

At the initial stage of training, as the institution portraits in the self-report, trainees receive instruction on the basics of academic integrity, including an explanation of unacceptable forms of behaviour (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) and the possible consequences of violating them. This contributes to the conscious acceptance by trainees of the ethical standards enshrined in the educational policy of the CoE

Assessment procedures are transparent and regulated: they are included in the content of the programmes and ensure objectivity through the use of clear criteria, as well as self-assessment and peer assessment tools, which reduce the risk of subjective assessment.

To prevent academic misconduct, CoE says it uses anti-plagiarism systems to check trainees’ reports and monitors the final testing process.

One of the key components of the quality assurance system for professional development programmes, as written in the self-report, is the participation of external stakeholders, which is in line with the principles of transparency and independent evaluation. As part of the programme, external assessment of trainees' educational achievements is carried out by the "Centre for Pedagogical Measurement". This procedure, according to the institution, ensures an objective and reliable assessment of the level of mastery of the programme content.

1.2 Assessment

The CoE has a Quality Assurance Policy that fulfils the standards and is available online. As part of the "Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools" (NIS), the CoE is also embedded in the quality assurance system of the overall organization, where a special quality centre, the "Center for Pedagogical Measurement" (CoP), supports the CoE in monitoring and reviewing the quality of the Centre and its programmes. Furthermore, the CoE has an internal quality circle, which is well elaborated and in use. Overall, it appears that all different levels (trainees, trainers, developers, management, quality supervisors) are well interconnected and operate within the quality assurance framework. The CoE also has internal processes to assess trainees and trainers and collaborates with international institutions (TALIS, PISA).

According to the institutional Quality Assurance Policy (2018), the QA system is integrated into the CoE's strategic management and coordinated through the Scientific and Methodological Council and the analytical department. The policy explicitly includes principles of transparency, academic integrity, equality, and continuous improvement. The QA Policy is aligned with national legislation and international quality standards and is periodically reviewed by the Methodological Council.

The criterion is fulfilled because the CoE has an established, transparent, and effectively implemented Quality Assurance Policy that is fully aligned with the ESG standards. The QA system is embedded in both institutional and organizational structures, ensuring coherence, accountability, and continuous improvement across all levels.

1.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

2 ESG Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and 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.

2.1 Implementation

The programme “Leaders of Change: A New Look at Modern School Management (Training Future Leaders)”, according to the self-report, was developed as part of the project “1,000 Leaders of Change in Education” on behalf of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Due to the state-level status of the project, the programme was governed by the Rules for the Appointment of Senior Managers and Teaching Staff in State Educational Organisations (Order No. 57, dated 21 February 2012). In accordance with these rules, training is structured by levels with mandatory external assessment after each stage.

The programme, as stated in the self-report, is developed and approved by CoE in accordance with the following regulatory documents:

- Rules for the development, coordination and approval of educational programmes for teachers' advanced training courses, approved by Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 175 of 4 May 2020 175;
- Regulations ‘On the preparation of educational programmes for the advanced training of teachers of educational organisations and the educational and methodological complex’, approved by order of the CoE dated 22 November 2024 No. 255/OD.

The institution states, that the development process is coordinated by the Department of Educational Programmes in collaboration with experienced trainers and consists of several regulated stages. The stages include establishment of the working group, pre-course study (analysis of legislation and diagnostics of professional difficulties and needs of teachers), development of draft programme, public discussions, internal approval, external approval, programme approval and development of teaching and methodological complex.

As written in the self-report the programme is being developed with the participation of external and internal stakeholders. It is developed with the involvement of trainers who have practical experience in school management and in delivering leadership training programmes for education professionals. The participation of such experts has, as the institution states, ensured the programme's substantive relevance and its focus on real management practices and challenges.

According to the self-report the results of a pre-course study conducted in 2023 were used to develop the programme. Representatives of the target audience – teachers applying for the management reserve – took part in the study. The diagnostic procedures included a question-

naire aimed at identifying current professional difficulties and needs in management competencies. Analysis of the data revealed typical difficulties faced by the study participants, including insufficient development of management, legal, financial and economic competencies, digital leadership, and strategic thinking. These results formed the basis for designing the structure and content of the programme, allowing the content of the modules to focus on developing the key competencies necessary for the effective performance of management functions.

The institution says the programme went through public consultation, internal review by the Scientific and Methodological Council, and final approval by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It aims to develop the key managerial competencies of future leaders that are necessary to bring about significant changes in the secondary education system of Kazakhstan. Moreover, it aims to develop managerial skills and create real opportunities for professional advancement for graduates. Graduates who complete all stages of the programme become eligible for career advancement within the Kazakhstani education system.

The methodological basis of the curriculum includes as portrait in the self-report the integration of modern theoretical and practical approaches to educational leadership and management: the theory of transformational leadership (Fullan), models of change (Kotter), the concept of managerial roles (Mintzberg, Drucker), approaches to the development of emotional intelligence (Goleman), models of organisational culture (Schein, Bolman), strategic management and business analysis (Porter, Kim).

The programme, according to the institution, takes into account regulatory and legal documents in the field of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as international recommendations from UNESCO and the OECD in the field of management capacity development in education.

The programme, as shown in the self-report, is delivered in three levels: basic, advanced, and professional and comprises a total of 440 academic hours out of which 360 hours are implemented in full-time education, 20 hours are implemented in an online format and 60 hours are allocated for practical training in schools at the place of work (30 hours at the advanced and professional levels, respectively).

The educational process is, as of the self-report, organised in strict accordance with the approved curriculum and academic schedule. Daily study load is no more than 8 academic hours (1 academic hour is 45 minutes). Classes are held from 09:00 to 16:30 with a five-day school week, including breaks.

Study groups are formed considering the language of instruction and the standard capacity (no more than 30 people), which ensures an individualised approach and increases the effectiveness of the learning process. To coordinate the training, each group is assigned a supervisor from among the CoE's staff.

The institution explains the curriculum as follows:

The content of the basic level includes trends in secondary education in the context of globalization, leadership in the face of change, professional and personal qualities of an effective leader, profile of a leader, psychology of self-development of a school principal and a values-based approach to teaching and education.

Advance level content includes subjects on leader and team: organising effective work, leadership in promoting teachers' research activities, professional development of the team, digitalisation of education and change management in schools and soft skills to enhance the professional value of the team.

Professional level content focuses on legal, financial and economic foundations of school management (based on school cases), corporate culture of the school, comfortable and safe educational environment, strategic management of school development based on data, shaping the business mindset of a school leader and effective communication and the art of negotiation.

Furthermore, it is explained that the educational trajectory is structured in stages and is accompanied by independent external assessment carried out by the "Center for Pedagogical Measurement". At the basic level, assessment is carried out in the form of standardised testing, while at the advanced and professional levels, it takes the form of reflective reports and portfolios. The results of the interim and final assessments serve as the basis for admission to the next level of training, ensuring continuity and progressive development of management potential.

Trainees who have successfully completed all three levels of the programme and passed the final external certification receive, as stated by the institution, a standardised certificate confirming the completion of 440 academic hours of professional development. The certificate is the basis for participation in the next stage - a projective interview at the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Based on the results of the interview, programme graduates who receive a positive assessment are included in the national personnel reserve of secondary education organisation leaders. In the future, if there are vacancies and in accordance with the competitive procedure, they may be appointed to the positions of school principals.

2.2 Assessment

The “Leaders of Change” programme is well aligned with the overall mission and strategic goals of the CoE, which focus on the professional development of teachers and the preparation of next generation school leaders. As part of a nationwide network of fifteen branches, the CoE contributes directly to Kazakhstan’s educational reform agenda by training deputy and acting school directors to become effective principals. The programme thus operationalises the CoE’s mission to enhance leadership quality and indirectly improve student outcomes in schools.

The design of the programme follows a clearly defined institutional process. The programme began with comprehensive pre-course research analysing national and international trends and needs in educational leadership. Findings from these studies inform the formulation of the concept, curriculum, and learning outcomes. External evidence from OECD TALIS, and other international sources is incorporated. The development and approval process involves a working group composed of programme developers, trainers, and external experts, and includes feedback loops from participants and graduates. The programme is further refined through continuous monitoring, internal evaluations, and cooperation with the Centre for Pedagogical Measurements, which provides independent quality assurance.

External stakeholders and students are actively involved in programme design and revision. Feedback from current participants and alumni is systematically collected through digital platforms, surveys, and post-course workshops. Graduates’ experiences are used to update content and methodologies. Furthermore, partnerships with schools, regional education departments, and international institutions (e.g., Cambridge University) ensure that the programme remains relevant to professional practice and policy priorities.

The programme’s objectives and intended learning outcomes are well defined. They emphasise transformational and instructional leadership, team management, and strategic school development. The three structural pillars – “I as a leader,” “Me and my team,” and “Managerial skills” – effectively address the professional requirements for school leaders. These aims correspond to the expectations for advanced professional qualifications and reflect the needs of the educational sector, especially in addressing the shortage of competent school leaders in rural areas.

The curriculum structure supports these objectives through a coherent blend of theoretical and practical learning. The programme is delivered in three levels combining face-to-face and distance learning, with psychometric and competency-based assessments at each stage. The integration of reflective practice, project work, and applied school-based improvement initiatives ensures a close link between learning outcomes and professional application. Although ECTS credits are not yet applied within Kazakhstan’s teacher training context, the workload and progression are transparent and appropriate for the intended qualification level.

Mandatory internships are well structured. Participants undertake practice-based projects in their own or other schools, often focusing on school development planning and change management. These experiences are complemented by reflection reports and peer discussions with trainers. Graduates also benefit from extensive post-course support for up to one year, including school visits, follow-up workshops, and an alumni network, ensuring the sustainability of learning outcomes.

The programme's intended career outcomes are clear and adequate: graduates are eligible for appointment as school directors or deputy heads without competitive procedures, and employability data demonstrate a high and increasing placement rate. In line with the Council of Europe's four purposes of higher education, the programme supports sustainable employment, fosters personal and professional growth, promotes civic responsibility through leadership in educational communities, and encourages innovation and research-based school development.

The institutional approval process is formalised and transparent. The programme and its updates are reviewed every three to five years and must comply with ministerial regulations. External evaluation and cooperation with quality assurance bodies strengthen accountability and relevance.

Overall, the design and approval of the "Leaders of Change" programme are systematic, research-informed, and inclusive. The programme effectively meets its defined objectives and national qualification requirements. Strengthening the curriculum regarding managerial aspects such as financing, budget planning, and legal frameworks, and integrating more case studies focused on rural schools, could further enhance its practical orientation. Strengthening links with universities for postgraduate certification pathways could also represent potential added value for the programme in the future. Nevertheless, the comprehensive design process, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement mechanisms are commendable.

2.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

The expert panel proposes the following recommendation:

- Managerial aspects such as financing, budget planning and legal frameworks should be strengthened in the curriculum.

3 ESG Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach

3.1 Implementation

At the programme design stage, the results of pre-course monitoring, which identified key deficits in management competencies, were, as stated in the self-report, taken into account. On this basis, training modules reflecting current professional development tasks were formed. The programme serves a highly diverse audience, ranging in age from 25 to 58 years, with participants holding varying levels of leadership experience – from teachers to vice-principals – and representing both urban and rural schools across the country. This contributes to the implementation of the principles of inclusiveness and equal access.

To support learner autonomy and individual pacing, according to the institution, each trainee receives a comprehensive teaching and methodological complex, including a Trainee's Manual, curated digital resources, and recommended readings. The materials are posted on the distance learning system before the start of the training and are available throughout the course.

The programme, as stated in the self-report, is founded on David Kolb's experiential learning model, where the educational cycle includes practical experience – reflection – conceptualisation – experimentation. Within this model, various forms of activity are used: interactive lectures, case studies, training sessions, facilitation sessions, project and group work, and role-playing games. Each task in the programme contains a component of self-reflection – analysis of the experience gained, conclusions and formulation of follow-up actions.

Formative assessment is, according to the institution, carried out by the trainer throughout the entire learning process. It allows tracking the individual progress of trainees, identifying difficulties and adapting the educational trajectory in a timely manner. Current formative assessment is implemented on the basis of assessment criteria developed in accordance with the learning objectives and expected outcomes for the topic of the session. Along with the trainer's assessment, mutual assessment and self-assessment of trainees are organised. Because the programme focuses on skill development, structured peer and trainer feedback, as well as individual reflection, are integrated into pair, trio, and group activities. Constant feedback promotes the development of reflection, awareness and motivation, which is in line with the principles of andragogy and the dialogue approach to learning. Particular attention is paid to the authenticity of practice and the principles of academic integrity; reflective thinking by trainees and the ability to analyse the results of their activities.

Summative assessment is, as the institution says, conducted by the “Center for Pedagogical Measurement” at the end of each level of the programme (basic, advanced and professional) in accordance with the Assessment Rules which are available online.

According to the self-report the assessment criteria are presented to trainees in advance in the Trainee's Manual, which ensures transparency and increases academic responsibility. A teaching evaluation system complements this approach, incorporating self- and peer assessments, classroom observations, and reflective discussions.

Pursuant to the self-report trainees take an external test organised by the “Center for Pedagogical Measurement” at the end of the basic level. Trainees receive a list of topics and assignment formats in advance, which ensures transparency and allows them to prepare for the assessment procedure. The advanced level includes compulsory school practice. Based on the results of the practice, each trainee prepares a reflective report No. 1, reflecting the analysis of their own management decisions. The report is evaluated by external experts from the “Center for Pedagogical Measurement” based on pre-approved criteria presented in the Rubric for Evaluating Reflection Report No. 1. At the final stage, trainees prepare reflective report No. 2, which is subject to independent expert evaluation using a similar procedure, based on the criteria set out in the Rubric for evaluating reflective practice report No. 2.

The programme, as is made transparent in the self-report, does not provide for procedures for retaking the final assessment.

3.2 Assessment

The program applies a wide range of diverse and effective teaching and learning methods that place the learner at the centre of the educational process. To promote learner independence and support individual learning paths, each trainee is provided with an extensive set of methodological materials comprising a Trainee's Manual, selected online resources, and suggested literature. All materials are made available before the beginning of the course on the distance learning platform and can also be accessed through the institution's library. The curriculum integrates interactive lectures, case studies, simulation-based training, facilitation sessions, project and group work, as well as role-play and reflection activities. This variety ensures that theoretical input is consistently linked to practical application, supporting active engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking. The chosen teaching approaches are sufficiently varied and aligned with the programme's intended learning outcomes.

Teaching methods are systematically monitored and continuously enhanced. Feedback from trainees is an essential part of the quality assurance process and can be provided through several channels, including the distance learning platform. Trainers and programme coordinators regularly review this feedback to adapt and refine instructional strategies. In addition,

classroom observations, reflective sessions, and peer discussions contribute to an ongoing culture of pedagogical improvement.

Trainees have multiple opportunities to express feedback, concerns, or suggestions for improvement. Open communication between trainers and trainees is encouraged both in and outside the classroom. If any issues arise, trainees are invited to discuss them directly with their trainer and develop an individual plan of action. Group discussions, mixed working groups, and transparent evaluation criteria further contribute to a culture of openness. The digital platform additionally provides an official channel for feedback submission. Trainees can also contact the educational department within the centre, ensuring that all voices can be heard and considered in a timely manner.

Students have adequate opportunities to appeal assessment results. Communication between trainees, trainers, and the programme administration is described as open and constructive, enabling prompt clarification of concerns related to grading or evaluation. All relevant regulations clearly define the criteria and methods of assessment.

The examination process is transparent and comprehensible. At the end of the basic level, trainees complete an external test organized by the “Center for Pedagogical Measurement”. The list of topics and assessment formats is distributed in advance to allow appropriate preparation. As the programme maintains a competitive standard, retakes are not permitted, which further emphasizes reliability and fairness. The assessment formats are well aligned with the intended learning outcomes and demonstrate a clear progression across levels. At the basic level, trainees complete an external test assessing foundational knowledge and pedagogical understanding. In the advanced level, they submit Reflective Report No. 1, analysing their own management decisions. At the professional level, Reflective Report No. 2 is evaluated by independent experts through a standardized procedure. This structure ensures that assessments are both competency-oriented and supportive of individual professional growth.

A particular strength of the programme is the student-centred communication culture. Trainees report high levels of interaction, personalized feedback, and genuine pedagogical support from trainers. The integration of reflective and practice-oriented learning fosters ownership and self-regulated learning.

3.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

4 ESG Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

4.1 Implementation

According to the self-report, the Centre of Excellence implements the procedures for admission, enrolment, and organisation of professional development courses on the basis of several regulatory documents. These include the *Rules for the organisation and conduct of professional development courses for teachers and for the post-course support of their professional activities*, approved by Order No. 95 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 28 January 2016. In addition, the Centre follows its *Regulations for the organisation and conduct of advanced training courses for teachers* at the Centre of Excellence and its branches, approved by Order No. 482/OD of 7 November 2022. Further internal regulations governing the organisation and delivery of advanced training courses for teachers in educational organisations also apply. Finally, the implementation of these procedures is guided by the annually approved production plan for advanced training courses, which is coordinated with the authorised body in the field of education and endorsed by the Founder.

Given the status of the project as a state project, the process of selecting and enrolling trainees is, as detailed in the self-report, regulated by the Rules for the appointment of senior managers and teaching staff of state educational organizations, approved by Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 57 dated February 21, 2012.

The application process is, as shown in the self-report, open to all eligible candidates. The selection procedure consists of two consecutive stages: 1) Verification of compliance with qualification requirements (education, work experience and teacher qualification category) and 2) psychometric testing aimed at diagnosing management potential, motivational attitudes and cognitive abilities.

The institution furthermore explains that, based on the cumulative results of the competitive selection, a ranked list of recommended candidates is formed. The final lists are approved by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan and sent to the regional and city education departments for further organisational support.

The collection, monitoring and processing of information on the academic performance and attendance of students is carried out on a designated online portal as the institution states.

According to the self-report, upon completion of all stages of external assessment under the programme, trainees, who have successfully met the requirements, are issued a certificate of the established form.

4.2 Assessment

The programme is implemented by the Center of Excellence, a national institution with 15 branches and 186 qualified trainers, most of whom have practical school leadership experience. It aims to develop the competencies of future school leaders through a structured, three-level professional development system.

According to the admission and progression participants are mainly deputy school principals nominated through a national selection process in line with government priorities to address the shortage of qualified leaders. Progression is based on assessment results at each level; only successful participants advance. Those who do not complete the full course receive confirmation of completed hours and may reapply. While designed for Kazakhstani educators, international participants could potentially join, though language and national focus currently limit access. The expert panel suggests incorporating designated English taught content if the programme wants to expand internationally.

As the Recognition and Certification procedure, graduates receive two types of certificates: A) A Course Completion Certificate valid for five years, confirming acquired competencies and B) A Project Participation Certificate valid for two years, making the holder eligible to apply for school leadership positions.

Validity periods follow Ministry of Education regulations requiring periodic renewal and programme updates every three years.

The Quality Assurance of the Independent assessment of learning outcomes, 360° feedback, and systematic post-course support (mentoring, workshops, and school visits) ensure quality and sustainability of learning outcomes.

The programme meets ESG 1.4 requirements through transparent admission, structured progression, and competency-based certification. It is well-aligned with national priorities.

4.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

5 ESG Standard 1.5: Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff

5.1 Implementation

Training activities at the CoE are, according to the institution, carried out by employees who hold the positions of managers, senior managers and experts. Their functional responsibilities

and terms of remuneration are determined taking into account their level of qualification and degree of responsibility.

The trainer selection procedure is, as stated in the self-report, regulated by internal regulatory documents and implemented through an open competitive mechanism. The selection process involves publishing vacancies, reviewing applications, assessing qualifications, conducting interviews, and making decisions on a competitive basis, followed by formal employment and feedback to all candidates.

Selection criteria, as detailed in the self-report, include relevant education, proven professional experience, methodological and subject-specific competencies, leadership qualities, and active pursuit of professional development.

As part of a personnel policy, CoE has, as of its own statement, introduced mentoring mechanisms, professional development programmes, participation in scientific and methodological activities, and a balanced motivation system. Material incentives include bonuses, additional payments and social benefits; non-material incentives include participation in scientific events, professional communities and publication activity. Mentoring is implemented as a formalised adaptation procedure aimed at transferring methodological guidelines and value orientations. The procedure is carried out in accordance with the Regulations on the training and professional development of trainers at the private institution "Center of Excellence".

According to the self-report as of 2025 there are 89 full-time trainers working at the CoE and its branches, 100% of whom have higher education degrees in pedagogy, 11 of them are candidates of science, and 58 are masters of pedagogy.

CoE's branches operate, as the institution reports, in all 20 regions of Kazakhstan, ensuring access to professional development programmes and reducing the financial burden on local executive bodies by organising courses locally.

As shown in the self-report the workload of CoE's trainers includes academic and extracurricular components that meet modern requirements for the professional activities in the field of teacher education. The academic workload includes the implementation of professional development programmes in full-time and distance learning formats. The average annual teaching load per trainer is 800 hours.

5.2 Assessment

All trainers have higher pedagogical education; most possess master's degrees, and several hold PhDs. Their backgrounds include significant leadership experience as principals, vice-principals, or heads of methodological units.

The CoE ensures transparent and merit-based recruitment through a competitive process (public vacancies, qualification assessment, interviews). Selection criteria emphasize pedagogical expertise, management experience, and continuous professional growth.

The trainer development is regulated by the Professional Standard for Trainers (Order No. 243/OD, 2021). It includes structured mentoring for new staff, participation in national and international training, and internal/external certification every two and three years respectively. Mentoring supports methodological consistency across branches and facilitates knowledge transfer between experienced and new trainers. In line with this, increasing opportunities for academic mobility and participation in international leadership exchange programmes could further add value to CoE's staff development strategy.

To prevent burnout and sustain professional growth, the CoE introduced a Self-Development Day once a month, allowing trainers to focus on research, writing, and personal development. Trainers also participate in international collaborations with experts from Finland, Estonia, the UK, and the USA on topics such as educational leadership, inclusion, and AI integration in teaching. In this regard the expert panel supports the CoE in further strengthening and expanding cooperation with international trainers and researchers to enrich methodological diversity.

According to the workload and collaboration, the trainers' annual workload averages 800 academic hours, combining instructional, methodological, and research activities. Each trainer provides consulting to 5–10 schools annually through the post-course support system. Team coordination and consistency are ensured through the central office's methodological oversight, shared digital platforms, and regular reflective meetings.

Trainers are active contributors to research and publication: 172 publications in five years, including 45 articles (4 in Scopus) and one monograph. Annual methodological recommendations are approved by the CoE's Scientific and Methodological Council and assigned ISBN numbers. CoE trainers also present at international forums such as WALS and collaborate with the University of Cambridge's Camtree platform.

The teaching staff of the CoE demonstrates a high level of professional competence, reflective practice, and engagement in research and innovation. The internal and external evaluation mechanisms ensure teaching quality, consistency, and continuous improvement.

The programme fully complies with ESG Standard 1.5. The CoE maintains fair and transparent recruitment, systematic professional development, and consistent quality assurance of its teaching staff. Trainers demonstrate strong leadership expertise, research engagement, and commitment to innovation, ensuring high-quality delivery and sustainability of the programme.

5.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

6 ESG Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

6.1 Implementation

CoE is, according to the self-report, equipped with modern infrastructure that ensures the delivery of programmes in face-to-face, distance, and blended formats. All staff workstations are equipped with up-to-date computer hardware, licensed software, and peripheral devices.

Training classrooms are, as detailed in the self-report, equipped with interactive whiteboards, multimedia projectors, and acoustic systems, workstations for trainers and participants with the option to use personal devices, high-speed wireless internet access (up to 1 Gbps), mobile, transformable furniture that enables interactive learning formats and standard sets of stationery and drinking water facilities.

The self-report further explains that for off-site training sessions, portable kits are used, including ultrabooks, short-throw projectors, and mobile screens.

Training classrooms are, as the institution says, supplied with educational and methodological literature, including original publications, practical manuals, collections, and issues of the Pedagogical Dialogue journal.

According to the self-report, to support the creation of digital content, a multimedia studio operates within the CoE, including a Jalinga interactive video studio for the visual presentation of complex pedagogical concepts, a photo zone for the preparation of illustrative and presentation materials, a chroma key zone for the creation of multimedia simulations, a podcast zone for recording audio content and expert interviews and a live-streaming zone for webinars, online conferences, and digital seminars.

Rapid printing services are, as stated in the self-report, provided by an in-house print shop that adapts materials to the specific needs of training programmes. CoE houses a library with open access to both printed and digital resources, including an independent study area with internet access, which supports the development of a self-directed learning environment.

Through a subscription by AEO “NIS” trainers and participants have, according to the institution, access to leading academic databases such as Scopus (Elsevier), Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics), and Wiley Online Library.

According to the self-report a supportive educational environment at the CoE is ensured through a combination of physical conditions and service infrastructure including coworking space for participants from other regions, offering facilities for individual work and rest, rest

and waiting areas in hallways and corridors designed to reduce emotional stress and promote well-being, a cafeteria and snack bar, ensuring access to meals throughout the training day, ATMs on the ground floors for accessible financial transactions, a video surveillance system and physical security services to ensure participant safety, an electronic access control system to prevent unauthorised entry into training and administrative areas, fire alarms and evacuation maps placed according to technical and fire safety requirements, a first-aid kit providing access to basic medications in emergency situations, accessibility features, including a ramp at the entrance, marked disabled parking, and bicycle parking, in line with principles of universal design.

According to the self-report, several services are available to broaden access to consultation and information. These include an Appeals and Applications Commission, which conducts independent reviews of submissions and issues recommendations; a feedback service accessible through the digital education platform and email; a call centre operating via a virtual PBX; a Telegram channel that enables mobile interaction and rapid response routing; and the *Beyim Ustaz* digital platform.

The self-report further explains that online courses are delivered through an online platform designed to support blended learning formats. Its functional components comprise a programme catalogue outlining goals, objectives, structure, content, expected learning outcomes, and curricula; a registration and learning environment providing access to modules, assignment submission, assessment, and certificate issuance; a multilingual and adaptive interface available in Kazakh, Russian, and English and compatible with all device types; user profiles and analytics, including personal accounts, calendars, and integrated assessment and feedback systems; and a resource module that offers registered trainers and participants access to electronic teaching and learning materials.

6.2 Assessment

The Center of Excellence (CoE), operating under the Autonomous Educational Organization “Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools,” ensures the availability of sufficient material, digital, and human resources to support the implementation of the “Leaders of Change” programme. With 15 regional branches and 186 trainers across the country, the CoE guarantees equitable access to professional development opportunities for educators from all regions of Kazakhstan.

The programme aims to provide comprehensive support for participants throughout all stages of training – from admission to post-course engagement – ensuring inclusiveness, equal opportunity, and professional growth.

The financial student support and employment support was as following: the programme participants are practicing teachers who remain employed in their schools and continue receiving

their regular salaries during the training period. The programme is fully financed either by the Founder (AEO “Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools”) or by regional education authorities when training is ordered locally. No additional tuition fees are charged to participants.

The learning modes and flexibility of the programme are assessed particularly positive. The programme is delivered in a blended format, combining full-time and online sessions. The digital platform provides access to all study materials, interactive resources, and assessment tools. This flexibility allows participants to combine professional duties with study, ensuring accessibility for both urban and rural teachers.

As for the support during practical training, the panel assessed positively that during the school-based practice component, participants receive ongoing mentoring and supervision from CoE trainers and school-level mentors. Trainers are responsible for methodological support, feedback, and reflective discussions. Each trainer provides guidance to 5–10 schools annually, maintaining continuous contact through digital communication channels and on-site visits. Reflection, peer review, and individual feedback are integral parts of the process. Regarding the future development, the individual academic advising for participants from remote regions could be further strengthened.

The CoE adheres to the principles of inclusiveness and gender equality. The programme is accessible to all qualified educators regardless of region, gender, or background. Special provisions are made for teachers with disabilities, including digital accessibility features, adaptive scheduling, and personal consultation options. Gender representation across trainers and participants is balanced, with a significant proportion of women among both teaching staff and trainees. Equality of opportunity and fair treatment are key components of CoE’s institutional culture.

Each study group is supervised by an assigned trainer who acts as both academic advisor and mentor. Counselling and communication with participants are maintained through structured feedback sessions, reflective workshops, and digital communication platforms. Trainers remain in contact with participants after course completion, providing advice and sharing resources through WhatsApp groups and professional networks.

The CoE maintains a well-established graduate network to ensure continued professional engagement. Post-course support lasts officially for one year and may extend up to three years for school leaders. Graduates participate in webinars, workshops, and peer-learning events. The CoE encourages collaboration among alumni to exchange best practices, address regional challenges, and promote innovation in school management.

The programme’s sustainability is ensured by stable funding mechanisms and institutional backing from the founder. Regional authorities may also finance training upon request. The

CoE continuously modernizes its digital infrastructure, ensuring effective communication, access to learning materials, and data-driven monitoring. Feedback from graduates and regional partners is systematically collected and used to enhance programme design and delivery.

The CoE demonstrates an advanced support system for trainees, inclusive access to learning, robust post-course engagement, and sustainable resource management. The programme provides a strong model of professional development for educational leaders aligned with international quality assurance standards.

6.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

7 ESG Standard 1.7: Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

7.1 Implementation

At the CoE, information management is, as by their own statement, implemented as a continuous and strategically structured process that covers the entire cycle of professional development programmes (from participant selection to post-course monitoring of their professional trajectories). This approach is supposed to ensure evidence-based support for educational decisions and systematic quality management.

According to the self-report the Beyim Ustaz platform is the core of the CoE's digital infrastructure and provides the following functionalities integration of activities across all CoE's departments, synchronisation with state information systems, including the National Educational Database, the Ustaz portal, and the internal distance learning system, centralised collection, storage, and automated processing of data related to registration, academic performance, attendance, diagnostics, and feedback, automated generation of certificates, analytical reports, schedules, and gradebooks and personal accounts with an adaptive interface for all users, including those with special educational needs.

As to the institution the platform serves both operational and analytical functions, forming the informational basis for decision-making at all levels of management.

The collection and use of personal data is, as described in the self-report, regulated by the User Agreement and the Privacy Policy, approved by Order No. 45/OD dated 12 February 2024. Data are collected with user consent and are used for identification, training organisation, support, certification, and analytics.

As detailed in the self-report the Beyim Ustaz platform records participants' academic activity at all stages of training according to the following indicators completion of assignments and participation in sessions, interim and final assessments and submission of questionnaires and reflective reports.

Furthermore, it is explained in the self-report that an electronic gradebook generates automated reports used by trainers – to implement differentiated support strategies and provide targeted assistance, administrators – to determine eligibility for final assessment and transition to the next programme level and CoE departments – to evaluate programme effectiveness, identify gaps, and justify necessary methodological adjustments.

Monitoring and post-course support are, as stated by the institution, integral to the information cycle and provide an evaluation of programme quality and sustainability of results. The focus of analysis includes not only programme content but also the organisational, methodological, resource, and staffing aspects of implementation. Monitoring is conducted in both course and post-course stages, with goals and expected outcomes defined in internal CoE regulatory documents. Post-course studies are conducted 3–6 months after programme completion using surveys, interviews, focus groups, and expert evaluations.

All collected data, as the institution says, are systematised and used for adjusting programme content and methodology, improving trainer performance and planning of new training formats. Findings are published in the CoE Monitoring Research Series) and on the official website, ensuring transparency and accountability.

7.2 Assessment

The CoE has established a well-structured and efficient system for collecting, analysing, and using data relevant to the management of its programmes and institutional activities. Information management is deeply embedded in the organisation's quality assurance culture and effectively supports both operational decision-making and strategic development.

Data collection processes are comprehensive and systematically organised. The CoE gathers information from a wide range of internal and external sources, including pre-course and post-course assessments, student and graduate feedback, trainer evaluations, and external quality assurance reports. The Centre of Pedagogical Measurements, a legally independent partner organisation, provides external assessments and certification data, ensuring impartiality and reliability of results.

A key strength of the information management system is the use of a central digital platform. This platform stores student portfolios, psychometric test results, assessment outcomes, feedback forms, and certificates, and thus serves as a single access point (one-stop-shop) for the

monitoring of learning progress and institutional performance. Approximately 3,000 participants are currently documented in the system. The availability of aggregated national data enables the CoE to conduct large-scale analyses for research and programme development, although the raw data are kept confidential and only accessible to authorised personnel.

The procedures for analysing and using the collected information are well developed. Data are regularly evaluated at programme and institutional levels to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Programme developers, trainers, and management teams use the findings to refine curricula, update training materials, and adjust methodologies. For example, feedback from participants and external experts has directly led to modifications in module content and internship design. The iterative feedback-loop process ensures that each programme cycle benefits from the lessons learned in previous cohorts.

In terms of completeness, timeliness, and usability, the CoE demonstrates a high level of professionalism. Information is collected at defined intervals—before, during, and after courses—and results are made available promptly to relevant stakeholders. Monitoring is also longitudinal: post-course evaluations track graduates' adaptation to their leadership roles after three and six months, and the data are integrated into institutional reports and policy recommendations. All research results are published on the CoE's website, supporting transparency and public accountability.

Students and staff are actively involved in the data collection and evaluation process. Participants provide continuous feedback through surveys and the online learning platform; trainers gather qualitative evidence through observations and reflective reports; and alumni contribute to post-course assessments and dissemination projects. Trainers and programme developers engage jointly in analysing the findings and planning follow-up measures. This participatory approach fosters ownership of quality processes and contributes to the continuous enhancement of the programmes.

Overall, the CoE's information management system is both extremely comprehensive and effective. The institution makes systematic use of evidence for programme improvement and institutional development. Positive aspects include the integration of digital data systems, the cooperation with an independent external measurement centre, and the longitudinal monitoring of graduate outcomes.

For further optimisation, the CoE could consider expanding the analytical use of its rich data base for comparative and predictive studies and enhancing the feedback loop to students by sharing more outcome summaries in accessible formats. Nonetheless, the existing system provides a solid foundation for data-driven quality assurance and decision-making.

7.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

8 ESG Standard 1.8: Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

8.1 Implementation

According to its own statement, the Centre of Excellence ensures information transparency through an integrated digital ecosystem. This includes its official website, which serves as the primary public source of information about the Centre's activities; the *Beyim Ustaz* digital platform, functioning as an education management system that supports programme delivery and participant services; a distance-learning system based on Moodle that enables online and blended learning formats; and official social media channels such as Instagram and Facebook, which provide real-time communication with the professional community. The official website includes, as written in the self-report, information on the CoE, core activities, methodological publications, pedagogical dialogue journal, projects and links.

Real-time communication with the professional community is, as explained in the self-report, carried out through the CoE's official Instagram and Facebook pages, which feature announcements of events and courses; teacher-led masterclasses; feedback from participants and trainers; news and achievements.

8.2 Assessment

The institution ensures transparency and accessibility of information through an integrated digital ecosystem. Key details about the CoE, its programmes, and activities are available across several platforms: the official website (the main public source on CoE activities), the *Beyim Ustaz* digital platform (EMS for programme delivery and participant services), and the distance learning system (Moodle-based platform for online and blended learning). The website is logically structured, multilingual (Kazakh, Russian, English), and regularly updated, making it easily accessible to teachers, administrators, researchers, and international partners.

Communication with the professional community takes place via Instagram and Facebook, where the CoE shares announcements and achievements. Teachers typically learn about CoE programmes through the website, social media, regional branches, and professional networks. Overall, the institution provides clear, current, and useful information to all stakeholders.

8.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

9 ESG Standard 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should 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. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

9.1 Implementation

CoE implements, as by its own statement, a comprehensive monitoring system that spans all stages of the life cycle of professional development programmes. The system is designed to ensure the relevance, practical value, and alignment of programmes with the strategic objectives of Kazakhstan's education system.

Monitoring is, as detailed in the self-report, conducted within a three-level framework: pre-course, in-course, and postcourse studies. The methodology is based on the PDCA continuous improvement model (Plan– Do–Check–Act), as well as theoretical approaches in adult education, including needs-based programming (Knowles, Guskey), formative evaluation (Kirkpatrick), and transformative learning (Mezirow, Avalos).

According to the self-report, in 2023, as part of the “1000 Leaders of Change” project, CoE conducted a pre-course study involving school principals of various types and levels. The aim was to identify key professional challenges and skill gaps, which later formed the foundation for the structure and content of the leadership development programme. The results were documented in an official protocol prepared by the CoE’s Department of Educational Programmes and used for setting goals, shaping modular structure, and content of the course.

The in-course monitoring stage is, as detailed in the self-report, conducted after the completion of each programme level. In 2024, the study covered participants from all levels – basic, advanced and professional. The survey assessed aspects such as programme logic and structure, teaching quality, and practical relevance of the content.

The post-course study was, as of the institution, conducted in participants' real professional environments. Its purpose was to evaluate the integration of newly acquired approaches into practice, the sustainability of leadership and professional competencies, and areas requiring updates in the programme content. The study was carried out by the CoE analytical group in collaboration with regional branches, ensuring both scope and representativeness. A triangulation method was used for data validation, involving input from graduates, their colleagues, students, and their parents.

Monitoring results are, as the institution says, reviewed collectively at CoE's Scientific and Methodological Council meetings, executive briefings and working sessions. They serve to improve Programme content, adjust trainer activities and guide their professional development, optimise course delivery conditions, expand and personalise methodological support, define topics for new professional development programmes for Kazakhstani teachers.

9.2 Assessment

With a closer look inside the quality assurance process, the CoE uses an elaborate evaluation cycle that combines four stages in a cyclical way: (1) development, (2) observation, (3) internal evaluation, and (4) external evaluation. Here, a variety of evaluation and feedback tools are combined, which lead to a dataset for data-driven development. In this loop, each group participating in the programme is involved, including external partners. Especially for the trainees, there are several ways to provide feedback (online platform, messages, structured evaluation questionnaires, reflection rounds during training). The results are visible to all participants via the online platform. In summary, a well-functioning continuous improvement process is established. Furthermore, the CoE engages in systematic monitoring and periodic review together with the CoP and external partners. For example, they already conducted a nationwide evaluation with the CoP and this year they are planning to implement research with Cambridge University as an external partner.

The programme development and monitoring framework follows the PDCA model and combines pre-course, in-course and post-course studies based on established evaluation models (Kirkpatrick, Mezirow, Guskey). Results from monitoring and post-course studies are reviewed by the analytical group and discussed in the Scientific and Methodological Council to improve programme content and trainer performance. The data management is supported by the digital "Beyim Ustaz" platform, which collects, analyses, and reports results for all programme stages, ensuring transparency and evidence-based improvement.

According to the established ongoing monitoring and periodic review and in order to represent the programme even more strongly, as a potential enhancement, the CoE could, for example, consider defining a concise target profile of the ideal "Leader of Change" who successfully completes the programme. Such a short and overarching goal at the programme level could strengthen the visibility of the programme's mission and facilitate a more systematic evaluation of its outcomes. Having such a vision and mission statement at the programme level may also highlight the importance of the programme and increase the possibility of measuring its success.

On the one hand, the programme will bring Leaders of Change into schools who will focus on improving student outcomes. On the other hand, the panel knows that changing a school and

seeing effects on students' behaviour takes about eight years – changing an entire system takes even longer. Therefore, it is recommended to determine realistic evaluation objectives at the programme level for earlier evaluation rounds in cooperation with external partners. Without that, it would be difficult to obtain feasible evaluation results. This minor enhancements could further strengthen strategic alignment and impact evaluation.

Overall the CoE has established a comprehensive and systematic process for ongoing monitoring and periodic review of its programs. The evaluation cycle, based on the PDCA model and supported by the digital platform, ensures that data-driven feedback is continuously used for improvement.

9.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

The expert panel proposes the following recommendation:

- It is recommended to determine realistic evaluations objectives at the programme level in cooperation with the Department of Education and Measurements.

10 ESG Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis

10.1 Implementation

CoE, as by its own statement, systematically integrates external quality assurance procedures into its overall quality management system. Participation in institutional accreditation, international programme certification, and independent assessment of learning outcomes ensures impartial verification of quality and serves as a catalyst for continuous improvement.

CoE has, as detailed in the self-report, successfully passed institutional accreditation by the accreditation agency ACQUIN (Germany), confirming institutional quality and compliance with international standards. Furthermore, 11 professional development programmes offered by CoE have received international certification, attesting to the quality of their content, methodology, and organisational support.

CoE employs, as of the institution, a comprehensive approach, where internal and external quality assurance mechanisms complement and reinforce one another. Internal mechanisms enable the monitoring of learning outcomes, management of trainer professional development, and refinement of programme content. External evaluation provides independent verification, public transparency, and recognition at the national and international level. External quality assurance mechanisms include review of the programmes by authorized bodies based on

quality criteria and results of external review, independent final assessment by the “Center for Pedagogical Measurement”, analysis of participants’ outcomes, feedback from regional education departments and methodological centres, analysis of feedback and monitoring data to determine topics, expert review by the Editorial Board, discussion at the meeting of the Scientific and Methodological Council, certification/re-certification of the trainers every two years, independent evaluation of participant achievements and external reports.

10.2 Assessment

As mentioned in ESG topics 1.1 and 1.9, the CoE has a well-developed evaluation system that includes external components. Even though the CoP is part of the NIS, this centre can be regarded as an external partner that ensures external quality assurance while maintaining institutional integrity and independence in its evaluation and decision-making processes. The involvement of additional external partners, such as Cambridge University, is also being planned. All organizational levels of the CoE are involved in this process and in the ongoing quality assurance cycles. The results are made available through an internal online platform and also on the public website.

External quality assurance is conducted in cooperation with international agencies such as ACQUIN (Germany), under which 11 professional development programmes have been certified. These procedures follow a standardized cycle of self-assessment, external review, decision, and publication of results. Findings from external evaluations are translated into development and corrective action plans, which are monitored through subsequent QA cycles to ensure continuous institutional improvement.

To conclude, the CoE systematically participates in external quality assurance procedures conducted by recognized international agencies. These reviews are carried out in a cyclical and transparent manner, ensuring compliance with ESG principles and contributing to continuous institutional improvement.

10.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

IV Recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN

1 **Assessment of compliance the Standards and Guidelines in the Higher European Area (ESG) in the actual official version and the German Council of Science and Humanities (WR)**

The programme „**Leaders of Change: A New Look at Modern School Management (Training of Future Leaders)**“ was assessed on the basis of the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG), and the national or other relevant regulations.

The expert group concludes that the **ESG standards** 1.1 (Policy for quality assurance), 1.2 (Design and approval of programmes), 1.3 (Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment), 1.4 (Student admission, progression, recognition and certification), 1.5 (Teaching staff), 1.6 (Learning resources and student support), 1.7 (Information management), 1.8 (Public information), 1.9 (On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes) and 1.10 (Cyclical external quality assurance) are fulfilled.

The assessment criteria are as follows:

Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance: Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes: Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and 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.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment: Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification: Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.5 Teaching staff: Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support: Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.7 Information management: Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.8 Public information: Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes: Institutions should 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. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance: Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

2 Certification Recommendation

The peer-review experts proposes for „**Leaders of Change: A New Look at Modern School Management (Training of Future Leaders)**” the following **recommendations**:

- Managerial aspects such as financing, budget planning and legal frameworks should be strengthened in the curriculum.
- It is recommended to determine realistic evaluations objectives at the programme level in cooperation with the Department of Education and Measurements.

V Decisions of the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN

Based on the evaluation report of the expert group and the statement of the Higher Education Institution, the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN decided on its meeting on the 1 December 2025:

Leaders of Change: A New Look at Modern School Management (Training of Future Leaders)

The Professional Development Course “Leaders of Change: A New Look at Modern School Management (Training of Future Leaders)” is certified without any conditions.

The certification is valid until 30 September 2031.

The following recommendations are given for the further development of the study programme:

- Managerial aspects such as financing, budget planning and legal frameworks should be strengthened in the curriculum.
- It is recommended to determine realistic evaluations objectives at the programme level in cooperation with the Department of Education and Measurements.