

Substantive Change Report

by National Center For Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE)

Register Committee

Ref. RC38/C87

Ver. 1.0

Date 2023-03-03

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Decision of:	2023-03-03
Report received on:	2022-11-08
Agency registered since:	2019-04-01
Last external review report:	2019-04-25
Registration until:	2024-04-30
Absented themselves from / decision-making:	
Attachments:	1. Substantive Change Report , 2022-11-08. 2. Minutes of telephone conversation , 2023-01-13

1. The Register Committee considered the Substantive Change Report of 2022-11-08.
2. In regard to the activities performed by the agency, the Register Committee took note of the following:

a) Introduction of cluster programme accreditation

The agency has introduced cluster programme accreditation following a recommendation by its Coordinating Council. Consultation with stakeholders and piloting preceded the actual implementation of the cluster accreditation (ESG 2.2).

Cluster programme accreditations are awarded following the programme accreditation procedure. The criteria for outcomes have been enhanced (ESG 2.1), while no major changes have been introduced in the implementation process (ESG 2.3). The size of panels and the remuneration of reviewers will be altered depending on the size of the cluster. The panels will include at least one expert per study field in the cluster and will be chaired by a foreign expert (ESG 2.4).

The next review should explore further how the agency does the clustering of the programmes and whether the approach is fit for purpose (ESG 2.2).

b) Introduction of programme accreditation for HEIs operating abroad

The agency has been granted permission to perform cross border external quality assurance (i.e. programme accreditation for HEIs operating abroad). The accreditation procedure follows the programme accreditation guidelines. The panels in the cross border accreditation procedure involve foreign experts too (ESG 2.4).

So far, no review of this kind has been completed.

The next external review of the agency should address the fitness for purpose and the effectiveness of the programme accreditation methodology in cross border procedures (ESG 2.2). Additionally, the review panel is expected to look into the implementation of the full review cycle (ESG 2.3) and the consistent application of agency's criteria (ESG 2.5).

c) Updating the procedures for accrediting educational programmes

The Register Committee took note of the updated follow-up procedure (further details specified in the guidelines, but no major changes made in the form and the content) (ESG 2.3).

d) Implementation of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

The Register Committee took note of the change.

3. In regard to the changes in the organizational structure, the Register Committee took note of the following:

c) Involvement of the agency in the selection of the members of the accreditation decision making body

NCEQE now includes its own representatives in the Coordinating Council - the body responsible for the selection of candidates for the accreditation decision making body - the Authorisation/Accreditation and Appeal Council. In the clarification call (Annex 2), the agency explained that the list is still approved by the Ministry and the final decision still lies with the Prime Minister.

Next review should look into whether and how the new structure of the Coordinating Council affects the organizational independence of the agency (ESG 3.3).

d) Expansion of agency's remit of work

Since 2022, NCEQE is responsible for the external quality assurance of early childhood and preschool education institutions. A relevant department was added to the NCEQE structure. As the competences of the newly introduced department are not related to the higher education field, the Committee confirmed that the new structural changes are outside of the remit of the ESG.

4. The Register Committee took note of the reported changes. The Register Committee expects that the novelties in the procedures and the organizational structure will be analysed in full as part of NCEQE next renewal of registration.

Register Committee

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EQAR Substantive Change Report

Reference #	23681217
Status	Complete
Login Username	I.margishvili@eqe.ge
Login Email	I.margishvili@eqe.ge
Agency #1	National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
Agency acronym	NCEQE
Expiry date #1	30/04/2024
Contact #1	Lasha Margishvili
Phone #1	+995557243753
Email #1	I.margishvili@eqe.ge
Other organisations?	No
A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed?	No
B. Has the organisational structure changed?	Yes
Description	<p>In order to improve stakeholder engagement in the governance of NCEQE through Coordinating Council, to shift its functions from advisory to a managerial body and comply with ENQA recommendations, several amendments were initiated in the agency's charter.</p> <p>To decrease possible risks of influence from third parties, amendments in the NCEQE charter restricts the appointment of public officials (Minister and Deputy Ministers) as council members and sets obligation to involve students in its work.</p> <p>2021 amendments in the NCEQE charter set the number of the Council members, which consists</p>

of minimum 5 and maximum 13 members. The same person can be appointed as a member of the Coordinating Council only twice in a row. The members of the coordinating council are:

Representatives of educational institutions

(except for top management representatives);

Representatives of the MoES (except for Minister and Deputy Minister); Students' representative;

Employers' representative; Civil society (NGO)

representative; Representatives of international

organizations working in education; International

experts and other persons whose knowledge and

experience can be beneficial for the NCEQE's

development to better serve public needs.

The amendments in the NCEQE charter also set the new managerial functions of the Council,

which significantly shifted the role of the

Coordinating Council from an advisory to

managerial body along by adding other

significant functions to it. According to the

amendments, without the consent of the

Coordinating Council it will not be possible to:

Develop, approve and amend the strategic

development and action plans of the NCEQE;

Revise standards and procedures of external QA mechanisms...

... and propose ways of their further

enhancement; Amend the Charter of the

NCEQE; Develop, approve and amend key

internal regulations of the NCEQE; Develop and

amend staffing policies and budget of the

NCEQE; Revision of external review outcomes

of the NCEQE carried out by the ENQA, EQAR,

WFME; Develop opportunities for international

collaboration and recommendations for

internationalization of the NCEQE's activities;

Develop and approve internal QA procedures of

the NCEQE; Review outcomes of internal QA

procedures of the NCEQE and develop recommendations for further improvement; Establish information security policy of the NCEQE.

The Coordinating Council participates in the selection of the Authorization / Accreditation and Appeal Council members. This change gives more ownership to the NCEQE in the selection of Council members which underscores the managerial function and role of the Coordinating Council. To ensure effectiveness, integrity and transparency of the Council's activities, rules and principles of Council's work have been defined. The Council members should be independent and impartial in their decisions, and secure confidentiality. Public access to the minutes of the Coordinating Council on the agency's web page adds transparency to its activities. According to the 2022 amendments in the NCEQE's charter, the agency will be responsible for external quality assurance of early childhood and preschool education institutions, relevant department was added to the NCEQE structure: <https://eqe.ge/en/structure>

C. Changes in EQA activities

- 1. One or several new external QA activities were introduced
- 2. Substantive changes carried out to one or several existing external QA activities (e.g. changes to their methodology, criteria or procedures)

Description new/changed

Facing the ever changing needs and challenges of the QA for higher education landscape locally and internationally, the NCEQE strives for continuous self-improvement, modernizing its current external QA approaches and establishing new frameworks for the whole HE system in the country. Fulfilling the recommendations issued

by the ENQA assessment panel in 2019 and 2021, as well as upholding the principles to be followed in line with the National Educational Strategy 2022-2030, played the role of paramount importance in the latest changes of the agency's QA activities.

The goals to be achieved by 2030, nationally and regionally, at EHEA level, as well as considering recent global challenges, - economy, security or pandemic-wise, led the NCEQE to its periodic review of the set of standards for program accreditation; the standards and criteria for program accreditation have been updated and implemented.

As suggested by the Coordinating Council, Cluster Accreditation procedure was introduced and has been implemented in 2022. While MD programs cannot be subject to cluster accreditation, and they are of high importance to the NCEQE (a member of the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME)), the agency initiated an intermediary procedure of setting student quotas for Medical Doctor one-cycle educational programs. Moreover, when the HEI applies for accreditation of joint programs, run together by local and foreign institutions, the NCEQE applies European Approach.

The agency also improved and clearly defined the rules and conditions in relation to its follow-up procedures.

Finally, Recent legislative amendments allow the NCEQE to carry out international programme accreditation.

Please, check out...

... Annex 1 for a detailed review of recent amendments and modified procedures and/or criteria.

1. New EQA activity:

1	Cluster Accreditation
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• study programmes or higher education institutions• joint programmes using the European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
ESG 2.1	<p>Cluster accreditation provides even further enhancement opportunities to support internal QA at the Georgian HEIs, namely, in respect to ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.5 and 1.7, as it underlines: the importance adequate LOs and smooth student progression, correspondence of programs with the NQF, linkage between education and research, and of course allowing the HEIs to develop and analyze programs in a connected, holistic manner with directional and faculty/school-based approach.</p>
ESG 2.2	<p>Working groups (WG) were created for each initiative described above and relevant outputs were disseminated across all stakeholders, such as the HEIs, Public Authorities and general public. Multiple meetings were held with the beneficiaries, all the planned amendments were discussed on the annual QA conference and with the NCEQE's Coordinating Council. Moreover, piloting procedures preceded the actual implementation of cluster accreditation.</p> <p>WGs at the agency ensured that necessary corrections be reflected in the Accreditation Charter. For example, the agency defined: relevant number of experts to be involved in the panel in relation to the size of clusters, fields of study; requirements for interpretation and translation of program documentation; dates of evaluation, increased remuneration for reviewers, etc.</p>

ESG 2.3

1	https://eqe.ge/en/page/parent/519/akreditatsia
ESG 2.3	NA
ESG 2.4	<p>Starting from 2023 all clusters will be chaired by international experts, while for the remainder of 2022 they will be appointed as chairs only in case the clusters include doctorate programs, and if a regulated or an international joint program is presented for accreditation, or an accreditation is being conducted abroad. The number of experts within each panel will depend on the size of the corresponding clusters, so that each field of study is represented by at least 1 expert in the panel.</p>
ESG 2.5	<p>As mentioned in 2.2, the agency informed all the stakeholders on upcoming reforms and considered all relevant and substantiated recommendations, while specially appointed WGs developed the existing procedures and criteria further to address all the current challenges and main QA trends at the EHEA level on one hand and mapped out the aspirations in line with the ESG, following the recommendations received under previous ENQA evaluation and all the new initiatives to be evaluated once more during 2023 follow-up. All in all, the agency diversified its QA tools portfolio mostly by adding up to the existing procedures without drastic changes in its EQA framework.</p>
ESG 2.6	
1	https://eqe.ge/en/deqars
ESG 2.7	Same as in the Programme Accreditation
ESG 3.4/ESG 3.6	Same as in the Programme Accreditation
2. Changed EQA activity	

1	Program Accreditation (with Updated Standards)
2	Accreditation of Joint Programmes using European Approach (EA)
3	Increasing the student quota on the Medical Doctor educational program
4	Follow-up procedures
5	International Accreditation of Education Programmes of HEIs Operating Abroad
ESG 2.1	<p>Updated external QA procedures introduced by the NCEQE are not a conceptually new and different in terms of their content and purpose. Setting student quota and corrections made in the follow-up procedures will make it easier for the HEIs to better prepare themselves and anticipate the right course of action after accreditation in light of ESG 1.9 and 1.10. International and joint accreditation will further serve the interconnectedness of EHEA and promote shared understanding and common values of ESG 2015 in general, especially supporting ESG 1.4 for student mobility and recognition of prior learning.</p> <p>Finally, updated accreditation standards correspond to relevant standards in Part 1 of ESG Please, see Annex 2 for the mapping structure.</p>
ESG 2.2	<p>Working groups (WG) were created for each initiative described above and relevant outputs were disseminated across all stakeholders, such as the HEIs, Public Authorities and general public. Multiple meetings were held with the beneficiaries, all the planned amendments were discussed on the annual QA conference and with the NCEQE's Coordinating Council.</p> <p>WGs at the agency ensured that necessary</p>

corrections be reflected in the Accreditation Charter (requirements for interpretation and translation of program documentation, dates of evaluation and application, increased remuneration for reviewers, etc). Both, accreditation criteria and amendments in the charter, were approved only after considering the feedback from stakeholders.

ESG 2.3

1	https://eqe.ge/en/page/static/549/akreditatsiis-protsesi
2	https://eqe.ge/en/page/static/855/ertoblivi-programebi
3	https://eqe.ge/en/page/static/964/medicinis-ertsafekhuriani-saganmanatleblo-programebi
4	https://eqe.ge/en/page/parent/985/akreditaciis-shemdgomi-shefasebebi
5	https://eqe.ge/en/page/parent/519/akreditatsia

ESG 2.4

Along with the field and student experts, the agency introduced the experts of higher educational programs (HEP) to the pool of accreditation reviewers, with a minimum of 3-year experience in education management. The HEP experts have to be well versed in the HE legislation and key QA frameworks/guidelines, and make relevant suggestions to the panel before the chair submits the draft report to the agency.

The Center employs a rigorous selection and training stages before an applicant enters the pool of accreditation experts. Besides the initial training, experts are invited on multiple business meetings throughout the year, related to new legislation, latest QA practices, etc. Video tutorials were also created as part of the expert

training toolkit. Newly appointed experts will only act as observers in their first accreditation visit. The agency requires local experts to have a working knowledge of English and allows student experts to serve up to 1 year after graduation.

ESG 2.5

As mentioned in 2.2, the agency informed all the stakeholders on upcoming reforms and considered all relevant and substantiated recommendations, while specially appointed WGs developed the existing procedures and criteria further to address all the current challenges and main QA trends at the EHEA level on one hand and mapped out the aspirations in line with the ESG, following the recommendations received under previous ENQA evaluation and all the new initiatives to be evaluated once more during 2023 follow-up. All in all, the agency diversified its QA tools portfolio mostly by adding up to the existing procedures and re-arranging the criteria without significant change of the content.

D. Activity outside the scope of the ESG

No

File #1

[Annex_1_nceqe.pdf \(140 KB\)](#)

File #2

[Annex_2_nceqe.pdf \(129 KB\)](#)

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Substantive Change Report by National Center For Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE)

Minutes of Telephone Conversation

Register Committee

Ref. S87
Date 2023-02-02
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Date of the conversation:	13/01/2023
Representative of NCEQE:	Lasha Margishvili
Representative of EQAR:	Aleksandra Zhivkovikj

1. NCEQE has made a Substantive Change Report on 2022-11-08. In order to prepare the deliberations of the Register Committee on the report, EQAR contacted NCEQE via telephone to clarify the matter(s) below.
2. NCEQE agreed to clarify the matter(s) by means of a telephone conversation.
3. In regard to the changes of the standards of the programme accreditation, the agency has introduced a possibility for a cluster accreditation of programmes, following the same procedure as for the (so far) single programme accreditation. The updated guidelines have been published on the [website](#).
4. In regard to the International Accreditation of Education Programmes of HEIs operating abroad, the procedure follows agency's standards for programme accreditation. The panels will involve a country expert.
5. In regard to the follow up procedures, further details were specified in the guidelines, but no major changes in the nature of the process took place- the agency kept the two main forms of the follow up activities.
6. In regard to the involvement of the Coordinating Council in the selection of the Authorization/Accreditation and Appeal Council members, the agency explained that now the selection committee involves council's members too. The selection committee prepares a list of candidates, subjected to an approval by the Ministry of Education and Science. The number of candidates in the list matches the total number of members in the council (i.e. the Ministry can not add more candidates). The final decision on the appointment of the council members still lies with the Prime Minister of the country.