

## Decision on the Substantive Change Report by Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR)

**Register Committee**

9&11 October

**Ref.** RC44/C126

**Ver.** 1.0

**Date** 2024-10-14

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<b>Decision of:</b>	2024-10-11
<b>Result:</b>	Take note
<b>Report received on:</b>	2024-09-05
<b>Agency registered since:</b>	2017-02-01
<b>Last external review report:</b>	2021-12-07
<b>Registration until:</b>	2026-12-31
<b>Absented themselves from decision-making:</b>	n/a
<b>Attachments:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Substantive Change Report, 2024-09-05</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Minuted clarification by the agency, 2024-09-30</a></li> </ol>

1. The Register Committee considered the Substantive Change Report of 2024-09-05.
2. The Register Committee took note of IAAR's three new activities:
  - a) European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes,
  - b) Activities on digital education:
    - International Institutional Accreditation in Digital Education (including ex-ante)
    - International Programme Accreditation in Digital Education (including ex-ante).

### A) European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

3. Based on the information provided in the Substantive Change Report and within the annexed guidelines to the accreditation of joint educational programmes, the Committee noted that IAAR uses the European Approach with certain modifications that align with the agency's own policies on external reviews.
4. The Committee noted from IAAR's clarification that despite adopting the activity's guidelines in 2020, the agency has only completed one procedure, which was conducted as a pilot. The Register Committee noted that the report and decision for the pilot procedure are available on the agency's website.

5. While the IAAR uses the European Approach with further modifications, the Committee had no concerns regarding the compliance of this new procedure with the ESG.
6. The Committee further underlined that IAAR should have submitted a change report when the guidelines of the European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes were adopted.

## **B) Activities on digital education**

7. The Register Committee noted that IAAR introduced two new external quality assurance activities addressing the accreditation of digital education: International Institutional Accreditation in Digital Education (including ex-ante) and International Programme Accreditation in Digital Education (including ex-ante).
8. The Committee noted that both activities follow the same guidelines adopted in 2022, in accordance with the agency's policies on external reviews. To validate the evidence, both activities employ virtual site visits, collecting information through remote interviews, analysis of documentation, and assessment of the provider's digital platforms.
9. The Committee noted from IAAR's clarification that the agency has completed and published one report so far resulting from the International Institutional Accreditation in Digital Education. No procedure was yet completed under the activity International Programme Accreditation in Digital Education.
10. The Register Committee had no prima facie concerns that the ESG are complied with in the case of International Institutional Accreditation in Digital Education (including ex-ante) and International Programme Accreditation in Digital Education (including ex-ante).
11. **The Register Committee expects that the new activities A) and B) will be analysed in full against ESG 2.1 -2.7 as part of the next renewal of registration of IAAR, with a particular focus on whether the panels conducting reviews of digital education are in a position to validate the evidence provided by institutions and conduct interviews with various stakeholders as deemed necessary (ESG 2.3); and if publication of all reports is ensured for all new activities (ESG 2.6).**

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## EQAR Substantive Change Report

Agency #1	Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating
Agency acronym	IAAR
Expiry date #1	31/12/2026
Contact #1	Timur Kanapyanov
Phone #1	+77789739517
Email #1	<a href="mailto:timur@iaar.kz">timur@iaar.kz</a>
Other organisations?	No
A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed?	No
B. Has the organisational structure changed?	No
C. Changes in EQA activities	1. One or several new external QA activities were introduced
Description new/changed	<p>1) Introduction of the International Institutional and Programme Accreditation in Digital Education (including Ex-Ante)</p> <p>In response to the growing demand for quality assurance in digital education, the IAAR has introduced International Accreditation in Digital Education. This decision emerged from a comprehensive study of global trends in education, the increasing reliance on digital platforms for delivering educational content, and the feedback collected from various stakeholders, including HEIs and accreditation experts.</p> <p>The introduction of this new activity is not entirely a departure from IAAR's existing practices but rather an expansion and adaptation of our current accreditation processes to address the unique challenges and opportunities presented</p>

by digital education. Our previous external review had already established a solid foundation in institutional and programme accreditation.

Building upon this, we have tailored the existing accreditation framework to encompass the specific requirements of digital education institutions and programmes.

The development of the Standards and Guidelines for International Accreditation of Educational Organisations and Educational Programmes Implemented Using Digital Technologies (based on ESG) (Annex 1) was guided by international best practices and the principles outlined in the ESG, 2015.

The design and elaboration of these standards is based on the analysis of current practices and principles of quality assurance of e-learning programmes in international quality assurance networks such as ENQA, APQN, WFME, as well as on the conclusions of the "Considerations for Quality Assurance of E-Learning Provision. ENQA Occasional Papers...

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... No. 26" (2018) and the results of the Erasmus+ programme project "Kazakhstan Universities for the Enhancement of Quality Assurance Processes in Education Using Advanced Technologies (KUTEL, 2018-2021)". Key principles that underpin the new accreditation process include the responsibility of digital education providers to ensure high-quality educational services, alignment with international educational standards, and a strong emphasis on developing a quality culture within digital institutions. While the framework retains the core principles of our traditional accreditation processes, it introduces new criteria specifically designed to evaluate the effectiveness and integrity of digital education offerings.

By implementing Accreditation in Digital Education, IAAR aims to support the continuous improvement of digital education providers, ensuring that they meet the growing expectations of students, employers, and society at large. This new accreditation activity positions IAAR as a forward-thinking agency, ready to address the emerging needs of the education sector in the digital age.

## 2) Introduction of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (including Ex-Ante)

The IAAR has introduced the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, in response to the increasing demand for high-quality joint educational programmes across borders. This new activity aligns with the EHEA's standards and addresses the specific needs of joint programmes that are developed and implemented collaboratively by multiple institutions from different countries.

The decision to introduce this approach is rooted in the recognition of the growing importance of...

... international collaboration in higher education and the need for a consistent, transparent, and reliable quality assurance framework that applies uniformly across borders. The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes was developed to ensure that joint programmes meet the highest standards of quality while also facilitating their recognition across different national education systems.

This initiative builds upon IAAR's established expertise in programme accreditation, adapting it to the specific requirements of joint programmes. The new standards (Annex 2) and procedures were developed following extensive consultations with international experts and stakeholders,

ensuring they are aligned with the ESG, 2015 and the specific provisions of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (Yerevan, 2015).

The framework focuses on key areas such as eligibility, learning outcomes, programme design and approval, student-centered learning, and ongoing quality assurance. It also includes specific provisions for Ex-Ante Accreditation, allowing institutions to seek accreditation for joint programmes that have not yet been fully implemented but are in the development phase.

This is particularly important for programmes that involve complex collaborations and need assurance of quality before they commence.

The European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes aims to streamline the accreditation process for joint programmes, reducing administrative burdens and enhancing mutual recognition of qualifications. By implementing this new activity, IAAR supports higher education institutions in their efforts to provide high-quality, internationally recognised joint programmes,...

... thereby contributing to the broader goals of the EHEA.

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**1. New EQA activity:**

1	International Institutional Accreditation in Digital Education (including Ex-Ante)
2	International Programme Accreditation in Digital Education (including Ex-Ante)
3	European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (including Ex-Ante)
<b>Focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• study programmes or higher education institutions</li> <li>• joint programmes using the European Approach</li> </ul>

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## ESG 2.1

In response to the growing demand for quality assurance in digital and joint education programmes, IAAR has introduced two significant accreditation initiatives: International Institutional and Programme Accreditation in Digital Education and the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. These initiatives align with global trends and the evolving needs of the higher education sector. Most criteria for these new accreditation processes are based on existing standards, all developed in compliance with ESG 2015. The process for developing and revising standards remains consistent across all activities.

Standards are developed in accordance with the "Instructions for the Development and Improvement of IAAR Standards" (<https://iaar.agency/iaar/dokumenty-iaar/en>) and consider input from HEIs, academic experts, employers, students, and professional organisations.

New standards and criteria are created by a dedicated working group, discussed at Expert Council meetings, and reviewed by IAAR's Accreditation Council and Supervisory Board. IAAR also engages stakeholders through seminars to gather their perspectives and ensure a broad consensus.

All new accreditation activities are regulated by a unified document: the "Guidelines for the Organisation and Conduct of External Assessment in the Process of Accrediting Educational Organisations" (<https://iaar.agency/iaar/dokumenty-iaar/en>), which ensures that all procedures adhere to ESG standards and maintain consistency across different levels of accreditation.

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Mapping for each set of standards against the ESG Part 1 is attached to this report (Annex 3, Annex 4).

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## ESG 2.2

IAAR continues to employ a collaborative approach to ensure its accreditation methodology is fit for purpose and meets the evolving needs of the education sector. Stakeholders — including higher education institutions, academic experts, employers, students, and professional organizations — are actively involved in developing and revising processes and criteria. Feedback is gathered through consultations, surveys, and workshops, ensuring alignment with sector expectations.

All new standards and procedural documents are reviewed by IAAR's governing bodies, including the Supervisory Board, Accreditation Council, and Expert Councils, where diverse stakeholders are represented. This ensures that IAAR's criteria balance academic rigor with practical relevance.

The development of standards is also informed by international best practices and aligned with ESG 2015 standards. IAAR benchmarks its methodologies against global quality assurance networks such as ENQA, WFME, INQA/AHE and APQN, ensuring high standards and credibility. The process is transparent and iterative, with drafts reviewed by stakeholders in expert seminars and annual forums. Feedback is incorporated, ensuring that the methodology remains flexible and adaptable to future challenges.

Finally, IAAR continuously monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its processes through feedback mechanisms built into each accreditation cycle. This ensures that IAAR's methodologies are responsive, continuously

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improving, and relevant to the demands of digital and traditional education. By engaging stakeholders at every stage, IAAR guarantees its accreditation processes are rigorous, transparent, and forward-looking.

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### ESG 2.3

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<https://iaar.agency/iaar/standarty-naar/en>

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### ESG 2.3

In the context of digital education accreditation, where physical site visits are not utilised, the IAAR employs a rigorous, multi-layered approach to validate the evidence provided by institutions. This approach ensures the credibility and reliability of the accreditation process, even in the absence of physical visits.

#### Comprehensive Documentation Review:

Institutions undergoing accreditation are required to submit a detailed self-assessment report, along with supporting documentation, that covers all aspects of the accreditation criteria. IAAR conducts a thorough review of these documents, ensuring that they are comprehensive, transparent, and aligned with the standards.

#### Remote Interviews and Virtual Meetings:

To supplement the documentation review, IAAR organises remote interviews and virtual meetings with key stakeholders, including institutional leaders, faculty members, students. These sessions allow the agency to verify the information provided in the documentation, clarify any ambiguities, and gain deeper insights into the institution's digital education practices.

#### Digital Platforms and Tools Assessment:

IAAR also conducts an assessment of the digital platforms and tools used by the institution to deliver education. This includes reviewing the functionality, accessibility, and effectiveness of the digital learning environment, as well as the

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institution's capacity to support student learning and engagement online.

The evidence gathered from documentation, remote interviews, and digital platform assessments is triangulated to ensure consistency and accuracy. Any discrepancies are addressed through follow-up inquiries, ensuring that the...

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... final accreditation decision is based on reliable and validated information.

By leveraging technology and remote methods, IAAR ensures that the accreditation process for digital education is robust and credible.

## ESG 2.4

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The IAAR has maintained its established processes for selecting, appointing, and training reviewers, ensuring that the methodology remains effective and reliable. There have been no significant changes to these procedures, and the agency continues to perform well in this area. IAAR consistently holds training seminars at least six times a year (<https://iaar.agency/events/past/en?year=2023>), engaging highly qualified national and international experts.

### Composition:

IAAR's review teams continue to consist of a diverse mix of academics, industry professionals, international experts, and student representatives. This diversity ensures that evaluations cover academic standards, industry relevance, and the student experience comprehensively.

### Selection:

Reviewers are still selected based on their expertise, experience in quality assurance, and capacity to contribute to the evaluation process. IAAR follows its previously established requirements, maintaining a database of qualified

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experts who meet the agency's rigorous standards. The process prioritizes independence and the avoidance of conflicts of interest.

Appointment:

The appointment process remains unchanged, with reviewers matched to reviews based on their areas of expertise. Each reviewer receives clear guidelines detailing their roles and responsibilities.

Training:

IAAR continues to provide comprehensive training to all reviewers. The training focuses on quality assurance principles, IAAR standards, and review methodologies, with special emphasis on the ESG. This structured training ensures that reviewers are fully prepared to carry out fair and thorough evaluations.

IAAR's...

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... commitment to these established practices ensures that its review teams remain effective and credible in delivering high-quality assessments.

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## ESG 2.5

Same as in all our reviewed EQA

"Accreditation of Programmes in Management Studies, Economics, Law and Social Science (with FIBAA)"

"Cross-Border Accreditation of Basic Medical and Pharmaceutical Education"

"Cross-Border Accreditation of Medical Institutions of Education"

"Cross-Border Initial Programme Accreditation"

"Cross-Border Institutional Accreditation"

"Cross-Border Programme Accreditation"

"Initial institutional accreditation (ex-ante)"

"Initial specialised programme accreditation (Ex-ante)"

"Institutional accreditation of educational

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institutions"  
"Institutional Accreditation of the Organisation of Continuing Education"  
"Joint International Accreditation of Educational Programmes (with ACQUIN)"  
"Specialised Programme Accreditation (including ex-ante)"  
"Specialised Programme Accreditation of Medical Educational Organisations"  
"Specialised programmes accreditation"

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## ESG 2.6

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All QA review reports will be published in the Register at the following link: <https://iaar.agency/registry/en>

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## ESG 2.7

Same as in all our reviewed EQA  
"Accreditation of Programmes in Management Studies, Economics, Law and Social Science (with FIBAA)"  
"Cross-Border Accreditation of Basic Medical and Pharmaceutical Education"  
"Cross-Border Accreditation of Medical Institutions of Education"  
"Cross-Border Initial Programme Accreditation"  
"Cross-Border Institutional Accreditation"  
"Cross-Border Programme Accreditation"  
"Initial institutional accreditation (ex-ante)"  
"Initial specialised programme accreditation (Ex-ante)"  
"Institutional accreditation of educational institutions"  
"Institutional Accreditation of the Organisation of Continuing Education"  
"Joint International Accreditation of Educational Programmes (with ACQUIN)"  
"Specialised Programme Accreditation (including ex-ante)"  
"Specialised Programme Accreditation of Medical

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	<p>Educational Organisations"</p> <p>"Specialised programmes accreditation"</p>
<b>ESG 3.4/ESG 3.6</b>	<p>Same as in all our reviewed EQA</p> <p>"Accreditation of Programmes in Management Studies, Economics, Law and Social Science (with FIBAA)"</p> <p>"Cross-Border Accreditation of Basic Medical and Pharmaceutical Education"</p> <p>"Cross-Border Accreditation of Medical Institutions of Education"</p> <p>"Cross-Border Initial Programme Accreditation"</p> <p>"Cross-Border Institutional Accreditation"</p> <p>"Cross-Border Programme Accreditation"</p> <p>"Initial institutional accreditation (ex-ante)"</p> <p>"Initial specialised programme accreditation (Ex-ante)"</p> <p>"Institutional accreditation of educational institutions"</p> <p>"Institutional Accreditation of the Organisation of Continuing Education"</p> <p>"Joint International Accreditation of Educational Programmes (with ACQUIN)"</p> <p>"Specialised Programme Accreditation (including ex-ante)"</p> <p>"Specialised Programme Accreditation of Medical Educational Organisations"</p> <p>"Specialised programmes accreditation"</p>
<b>D. Activity outside the scope of the ESG</b>	No
<b>File #1</b>	<a href="#">Annex1._Standards_for_Digital_Institutions.pdf</a> (457 KB)
<b>File #2</b>	<a href="#">Annex_2._Standards_for_Accred_of_Joint_Programs.pdf</a> (607 KB)
<b>File #3</b>	<a href="#">Annex_III._Mapping_of_IAAR_Digital_Standards_with_ESG_Part_1.pdf</a> (23 KB)
<b>File #4</b>	<a href="#">Annex_IV._Mapping_of_IAAR_Standards_for_</a>

[Joint Programmes with ESG Part 1.pdf \(27 KB\)](#)

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**Submit form?**

I am ready to submit the change report form

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# Substantive Change Report by Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR)

Register Committee

## Minutes of Online Conversation

**Ref.** C126  
**Date** 2024-09-30  
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<b>Date of the conversation:</b>	2024-09-30
<b>Representative of IAAR:</b>	Timur Kanapyanov
<b>Representative of EQAR:</b>	Giorgi Munjishvili

1. IAAR has made a Substantive Change Report on 2024-09-05. In order to prepare the deliberations of the Register Committee on the report, EQAR contacted IAAR to clarify the matter(s) below.
2. IAAR agreed to clarify the matter(s) by means of an online conversation.
3. The EQAR Secretariat requested IAAR to elaborate on the current stage of implementation of the three new quality assurance activities, and whether the agency has already conducted and/or completed any procedures under these new activities, since adopting the standards and guidelines.
4. IAAR representative explained, that they had completed one review under *International Institutional Accreditation in Digital Education* and no procedures have been conducted under *International Programme Accreditation in Digital Education*.
5. Furthermore, the IAAR representative explained that the agency adopted the standards and guidelines for the European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes procedure in 2020 and until now IAAR has not completed any procedure, with the first reviews taking place at the moment with expecting to be completed by the end of the year.
6. The EQAR Secretariat further requested information on the status of accreditation of joint programme in 2022, promoted on the agency's website as a first example of employing the European Approach.
7. The agency clarified that this was indeed procedure conducted under by implementing the European Approach, however they considered this as a pilot procedure. Agency offered to follow-up by email after the meeting to provide details on the status of this review.
8. The EQAR Secretariat further asked if the agency is employing the European Approach when conducting joint accreditation procedures with partner agencies.
9. The IAAR representative explained that European Approach is not employed in joint accreditations.

10. EQAR secretariat thanked IAAR representative for the clarification call and the provided explanations.

**Register Committee**

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