

**Approval of the Application
by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
for Inclusion on the Register**

Register Committee
18/19 October 2013

Ref. RC11/2013/04

Ver. 1.0
Date 2013-10-21
Page 1 / 3

1. The application of 12/08/2013 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee considered the external review report of July 2013 on the compliance of the QAA with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines, ESG). The Register Committee found that the report provides clear evidence and analysis of how the QAA complies with ESG.
3. The Register Committee sought and received additional clarification from the QAA (letter of 26/09/2013) and the chair of the review panel (letter of 18/09/2013).

Analysis:

4. In considering the QAA's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee only took into account the review work of the QAA proper. The activities of QAA Enterprises are not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to the application for inclusion on the Register.
5. With regard to the specific European Standards and Guidelines, the Register Committee considered the following:

ESG 2.1: The external review report concluded that the Quality Code, which serves as a basis for most of the QAA's reviews, includes all relevant aspects of Part 1 of the ESG.

The Register Committee received clarification from the review panel to the effect that the Quality Code is used in all reviews carried out by the QAA.

ESG 2.2: The Register Committee received clarification from the QAA on the development of a new approach for the review of transnational education (TNE). The Committee understood that the new approach is still being developed in consultation with the QAA's stakeholders.

The Register Committee underlined that the QAA is expected to submit a Substantive Change Report (see §6.1 of the EQAR Procedures for

Applications) once the new approach is finalised and being implemented.

ESG 2.2: The Register Committee received clarification from the QAA on the development of the new higher education review method for England and Northern Ireland, featuring review intervals differentiated for each provider by “level of risk”.

The Register Committee understood that a handbook for the new method was published only after the external review of the QAA. A full analysis of the new method and its implementation will thus need to be part of the next external review of the QAA against the ESG.

ESG 2.5: The Register Committee received clarification from the review panel on the absence of public reports in the reviews for degree-awarding powers and university title. The panel referred to the fact that these reviews are carried out by the QAA in an advisory capacity to the government and the Privy Council.

The Register Committee considered that these reviews are an external quality assurance activity which falls within the scope of the ESG. The fact that the QAA acts as an adviser and does not itself take final decisions can thus not justify failing to comply with the ESG requirement for public reports. This matter has therefore been flagged.

ESG 3.4: The Register Committee noted the review panel’s recommendation to the QAA to take urgent steps with a view to making available the additional resources required for involving international experts in QAA reviews.

ESG 3.7: The Register Committee received clarification from the review panel on the fact that students are not part of the expert groups in reviews for degree-awarding powers and university title.

The considerations regarding ESG 2.5 apply accordingly. Furthermore, there appears to be no compelling argument why the nature of these reviews or the advisory capacity of the QAA would render the inclusion of students inappropriate. This matter has therefore been flagged.

The Register Committee made no specific observations on the review panel’s analyses of the QAA’s compliance with the remaining standards.

Conclusion:

6. The Register Committee considered that the QAA’s reviews for degree-awarding powers and university title are only one among several external quality assurance activities and are described as “relatively

Register Committee

18/19 October 2013

Ref. RC11/2013/04

Ver. 1.0

Date 2013-10-21

Page 2 / 3

rare” by the review panel. The finding of only partial compliance with the ESG as regards these reviews did, therefore, not call the overall judgement of substantial compliance into question.

7. Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that the QAA complies substantially with the ESG and therefore approved the QAA’s application for inclusion on the Register.

The QAA’s inclusion shall be valid until 31/07/2018¹.

8. The following issues have been flagged for particular attention when considering a potential application for renewal of inclusion:

ESG 2.5 – Reporting

Attention should be given to whether the QAA has taken steps to make publicly available the outcomes and full reports of the reviews for degree-awarding powers and university title.

ESG 3.7 – External quality assurance processes and criteria

In relation to the groups of experts involved in the reviews for degree-awarding powers and university title, the matter should receive attention as to whether the QAA has taken steps to include students as members of the groups.

Register Committee

18/19 October 2013

Ref. RC11/2013/04

Ver. 1.0

Date 2013-10-21

Page 3 / 3

¹ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.