



The Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance and Career Development  
(AQA)

## **Quality Policy**

Adopted by the Advisory Council  
(Minutes #1, 22.01.2008)

Moscow  
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## **Internal quality assurance system**

Since AQA's main activities consist of assessing the quality of others the Agency pays great attention to its own quality and has implemented internal quality system. The AQA requires a coherent and effective internal quality assurance system to be able to work professionally at a high level. Quality assurance measures are systematically applied and there are feedback mechanisms in place to guarantee quality development.

The model of internal quality assurance system has two levels of quality assessment procedure in the Agency: internal and external.

This model has been elaborated in accordance with ENQA Standards and the best practices and recommendations of international accreditation associations as INQAAHE, APQN.

### **1. Internal level of quality evaluation**

#### **1.1. Goals and objectives**

The goal of the internal assessment procedure is to obtain the clear understanding about the internal state of the Agency's affairs. As the quality is the important condition for effective work and competitive services.

#### **1.2. Internal review**

The Agency distinguishes five quality areas within the internal quality assurance system:

1. Leadership (Strategy, Policy, Communication, etc.)
2. Evaluation procedures:
  - Elaboration of Approaches (Institutional and Program Review)
  - Interrelation with Reviewers (Recruitment, Training)
3. International Affairs (International and Regional)
4. Legal Affairs
5. General Services (Human resources, Support services, Finances, ICT, etc.)

The Advisory Council is addressing all quality areas and appoints a coordinator for each one. Evaluation data is gathered by each coordinator on a systematic basis and at least once a year. The character and level of completion of the evaluations are prepared by the quality coordinator of that specific quality area. The Coordinator will also draw preliminary conclusions and will formulate possible measures for improvement. Subsequently the Advisory Council and the Director General will discuss the quality report. They will develop it into an annual management strategy that refers back to the different quality areas. The strategic aims per quality area are the steering factors in this process.

## **2. Cyclical external reviews**

In addition to the internal and external feedback mechanisms, cyclical external review is another important quality assurance mechanism used by the Agency. This procedure is conducted in a 5-year cycle. The external review procedure is based on the theoretical model *Cyclical review of quality assurance agencies* developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA, 2009).

### **2.1. Goals and objectives**

The goal of the assessment procedure is to verify whether the Agency performs in accordance with the international accreditation agencies' standards described in the documents adopted by the leading international quality assurance networks. They are: *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ENQA, 2005, 2009) and *the Guidelines of Good Practice* (INQAAHE, 2005). The external assessment documentation and findings are used in order to plan and make quality assurance arrangements in the Agency during the next 5-year period.

### **2.2. External Review Structure**

#### **2.2.1 Agency Operational Areas**

- Audit, analysis and assessment of
  1. programs content;
  2. educational technologies applied;
  3. organization of the learning process;
  4. university management.
- Rendering consulting services in quality assurance and assessment;
- Arrangements related to the assuring the stakeholder groups in regards with the quality of education in the universities.

#### **2.2.2 Self-evaluation**

1. The Agency information;
2. The Agency activities in academic audit and higher education quality assessment;
3. Academic audit methodology and procedures (procedure description, guidelines, auditors' work, reporting, appeal procedures, etc.);
4. The Agency quality assurance and development policies and procedures;
5. Additional documentation;
6. Findings and conclusions (achievements, areas for improvement, prospects, problem areas, and development plans).

#### **2.2.3 External assessment and audit**

The Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance and Career Development applies to an external organization for conducting an external review of the AQA work quality once in 5 years. The external review can be conducted by a Russian or international organization in 2010.

The parties make an agreement where the visit period, the parties' responsibilities, and the assessment procedure are described. The external agency selects and approves the nominees for the positions of experts, plans and conducts the site visit, and makes a final report and recommendations.

AQA submits its self-evaluation documents to the external agency within the period specified. AQA conducts its self-evaluation procedures according by predefined guidelines and criteria. An external organization visits AQA to verify and confirm the evidence described in the AQA self-evaluation report.

During the site visit external experts meet the AQA management and staff members, a few Advisory Council members, and other stakeholders' representatives. After the visit the external organization submits a preliminary report to AQA to check against possible factual mistakes and errors. External assessment report includes judgments about whether the Agency performs in accordance with the international (European, in particular) standards set for quality assurance and assessment in higher education area and some recommendations. The finalized version of the report is published on the AQA web site and in the relevant editions.