

Revision of the ESG: The draft initial proposal

BFUG Meeting, Vilnius, November 7-8, 2013

Achim Hopbach
ESG Revision Steering Group

The revision of the ESG

The Mandate

The Bucharest Communiqué 2012

“We acknowledge the ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE (the E4 group) report on the implementation and application of the ‘European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance’ (ESG). **We will revise the ESG to improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness including their scope.** The revision will be based upon an initial proposal to be prepared by the E4, in cooperation with Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), which will be submitted to the Bologna Follow-Up Group.”

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The Revision Process

Working structure and process

- Steering group was set up, composed of representatives from EUA, EURASHE, ESU, ENQA, BusinessEurope, EI, and EQAR. (For discussion and decision)
- Drafting group was set up, composed of QA experts that have participated in the mapESG project, nominated by EUA, EURASHE, ESU, and ENQA. (For drafting)
- mapESG report and open consultation during spring 2013 as sources
- Discussion of fundamental issues (scope, principles)
- 7 steering group meetings since late summer 2012

Next steps and timeline

- 8 Nov: Discussion of initial draft proposal at BFUG meeting
- 15 Dec: Written comments from BFUG members
 - esg.revision@ehea.info
- Jan/Feb: Steering Group meetings
- Beginning of March: Submission of draft proposal to BFUG

Guiding principles for the revision

- Keep the strengths: integrated concept and understanding of QA, broad applicability, broad ownership
- Overcome the weaknesses: vagueness, redundancies, inconsistencies
- Update: ESG as part of the 'Bologna-Infrastructure', taking into account recent developments in QA and HE
- Guarantee adaptability to future developments
- Keep a balance between changing as much as possible and as little as possible

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Context, scope, purposes and principles

(ex: Context, aims and principles)

Scope

“The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance. They describe a major part of a comprehensive infrastructure, which comprises of different elements (such as qualifications frameworks, recognition, ECTS, diploma supplement), related to quality of programmes and degrees (e.g. learning environment).

The ESG are not as such standards for quality, or do they prescribe how these processes could be designed, but they provide guidance, covering the areas, which are vital for successful for quality provision of higher education.”

Scope

“The focus of the ESG is on quality assurance processes related to teaching and learning in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research. The ESG apply to all higher education offered in the EHEA regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery. While some of the standards refer to programmes of study that lead to a formal qualification, the ESG are also applicable to higher education provision in its broadest sense and to transnational, cross-border provision.”

Concept

Due to the diversity in higher education provision, the ESG need to be at a reasonably generic level in order to ensure that they are applicable to all forms of provision.

Concept

At the heart of all quality assurance activities are the twin purposes of *accountability and enhancement*. Taken together, these create trust in the higher education institution's performance. A successfully implemented quality assurance will provide information to assure the higher education institution and the public on the quality of the higher education institution's activities (accountability) as well as providing advice and recommendations on how the higher education institution might improve what it is doing (enhancement). Quality assurance and quality enhancement are thus inter-related. This can support the development of a *quality culture* that is embraced by all: from the students and academic staff to the institutional leadership and management.

ESG: Four purposes

- They set a common framework for quality assurance systems at European, national and institutional level;
- They enable the improvement of quality of higher education in the European higher education area;
- They support mutual trust, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders;
- They provide information on quality assurance in the EHEA.

ESG: Four principles

- Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;
- Quality assurance processes respond to the diversity of HE systems, institutions and programmes;
- Quality assurance supports the development of a quality culture;
- Quality assurance processes involve stakeholders and take into account the expectations of all stakeholders and society.

Structure

The overall structure of the ESG with three parts remains the same.

In order to avoid existing overlaps between the parts 2 and 3 some standards were moved from the one to the other part because in both chapters subject matters were a mixture of standards referring to external QA processes and standards referring to agencies' policies.

Structure

A clearer distinction between standards and guidelines is made:

- The standards set out agreed and accepted practice for quality assurance in higher education in the EHEA and should, therefore, be taken account of and adhered to by those concerned, in all types of higher education provision.
- Guidelines explain the importance of the standards and provide information to assist higher education institutions, agencies and governments in the implementation of the standards in their individual context.

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Part 1

**Standards and guidelines
for internal quality assurance
within higher education institutions**

Current ESG – Part 1		Draft initial proposal – Part 1
1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance		1.1 Policy and processes for quality assurance
1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards		1.2 Design and approval of programmes
1.3 Assessment of students		1.3 Student-centred learning
1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff		1.4 Student admission, progression and completion
1.5 Learning resources and student support		1.5 Development of teaching staff
1.6 Information systems		1.6 Learning resources and student support
1.7 Public information		1.7 Information management
		1.8 Public information
		1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
		1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

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Main Changes in Part 1

- 1.2: Old 1.2 separated in new 1.2 and 1.9. Design of programme is mentioned more explicitly, reference to LO, ECTS, national QFs and QF-EHEA.
- 1.3: New. Emphasis on student centred learning. Teaching and learning more in the focus.
- 1.4: Admission more in the focus, progression and completion mentioned more explicitly, reference to RPL.
- 1.6: Diversity of student population emphasized.
- 1.10: New. Moved here from 2.7.

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Part 2

Standards and guidelines for external quality assurance of higher education institutions

Current ESG – Part 2		Draft initial proposal – Part 2
2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures		2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance
2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes		2.2 Designing processes fit for purpose
2.3 Criteria for decisions		2.3 Processes
2.4 Processes fit for purpose		2.4 Criteria for formal outcomes
2.5 Reporting		2.5 Reporting
2.6 Follow-up procedures		2.6 Complaints and appeals
2.7 Periodic reviews		
2.8 System-wide analyses		

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2.3 Criteria for decisions		2.3 Processes
2.4 Processes fit for purpose		2.4 Criteria for formal outcomes
2.5 Reporting		2.5 Reporting
2.6 Follow-up procedures		2.6 Complaints and appeals
2.7 Periodic reviews		
2.8 System-wide analyses		

Main Changes in Part 2

Standard 2.7 was moved to part 1 and Part 3; 2.8 was moved to part 3.

Content regarding development of procedures, standards for procedures and, criteria, were slightly rearranged

2.3: Student participation emphasized, publication of full reports. Moved here from 3.7.

2.5: Publication of full reports.

2.6: Moved here from 3.7. Relevance of complaints appeals procedure emphasized.

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Part 3

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies

Current ESG – Part 3		Draft initial proposal – Part 3
3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education		3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance
3.2 Official status		3.2 Official status
3.3 Activities		3.3 Independence
3.4 Resources		3.4 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct of the agencies
3.5 Mission statement		3.5 Thematic reflection and analysis
3.6 Independence		3.6 Resources
3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies		
3.8 Accountability procedures		

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3.4 Resources		3.4 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct of the agencies
3.5 Mission statement		3.5 Thematic reflection and analysis
3.6 Independence		3.6 Resources
3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies		
3.8 Accountability procedures		

Main Changes in Part 3

The content of the standards is slightly rearranged. Also, 3.7 is moved to part 2.

- 3.2: Recognizing public authority does not have to be from an EHEA country.
- 3.3: Notion of independence explained better
- 3.4: Professional conduct added in particular referring to working in other than the home country; limitation to recognized HEI

3.4 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

Guidelines:

- The agencies need to be accountable to their stakeholders. Therefore, agencies will not only want to uphold high professional standards and ensure integrity in their work...
- It has processes to establish the status and recognition of the institutions with which it conducts external quality assurance;

Example: 3.4 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct – cont.

- All persons involved in their activities are competent and act professionally and ethically;
- ...
- When working in different frameworks, it will
 - adhere to the core values of European Higher Education Area as demonstrated for instance in the Bologna Communiqués;
 - communicate, as appropriate, with the relevant authorities of those jurisdictions where they operate.



Thank you for your attention!

<http://revisionesg.wordpress.com>
esg.revision@ehea.info

<http://www.enqa.eu>
achim.hopbach@aq.ac.at

