QUALITY ASSURANCE OF EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ENQA IN BRIEF

Who we are

Membership association of QA agencies:

61 members in 33 countries

41 affiliates in 27 countries

What we do

Represent interests

Provide services to members and stakeholders

Drive development of external QA

How we do it

Policy input	Projects
Events	Publications
Working groups	Agency reviews

EHEA KEY COMMITMENTS

- **A three-cycle degree system** compatible with the overarching qualifications framework

- **Recognition of qualifications** in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention

- **Quality assurance** according to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

WHY QUALITY ASSURANCE?

Quality culture is doing the right thing when no-one is looking!

Quality culture has two distinct elements:

i) "a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality"

ii) "a structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual efforts"

(EUA, 2006, p. 10: Quality Culture in European Universities: A bottom up approach. Report on the three rounds of the Quality Culture project 2002-2006.)

Internal & external QA aim to achieve an enhancement-led quality culture, while ensuring sufficient accountability

EHEA TOOLS FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA

- External reviews of HEIs and programmes

- External reviews of QA agencies

- European Quality Assurance Register

- European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

- Recognition of decisions by EQAR-listed QA agencies

ESG
2015

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
in the European Higher Education Area
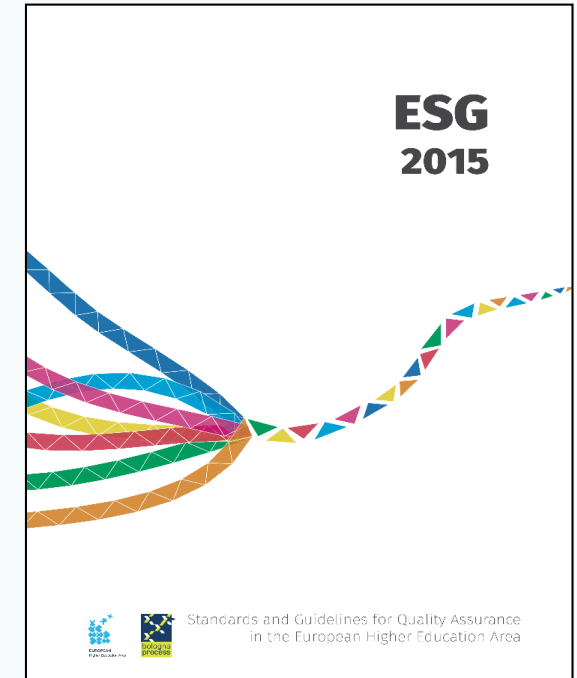
European Approach for Quality Assurance
of Joint Programmes

October 2014
approved by EHEA ministers in May 2015

Joint programmes are a hallmark of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). They are
set up to enhance the mobility of students and staff, to facilitate mutual learning and
cooperation opportunities and to create programmes of excellence. They offer a genuine

EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

- The EHEA was set up through the Bologna Process and is steered by the BFUG.

- IQA and EQA in line with the ESG is a key commitment of the Bologna Process.

- Primary authors of the ESG are the E4 Group (ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and ESU).

- The same organisations are the founding members of EQAR.
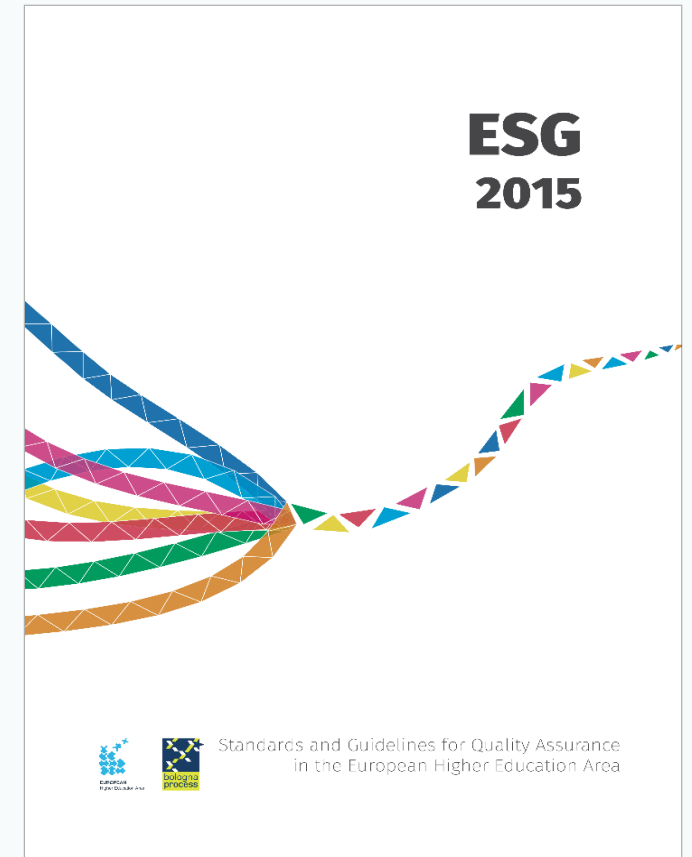
THE E4 GROUP

THE ESG

- The ESG are the agreed framework for QA of HE in the EHEA
- The ESG apply to learning and teaching, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation
- The ESG are generic in order to apply to all forms of provision and contexts
- The Standards set out agreed and accepted practice
- The Guidelines describe how standards might be implemented, which will vary depending on the context
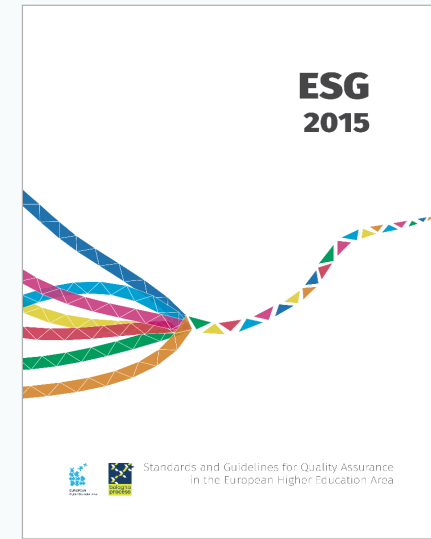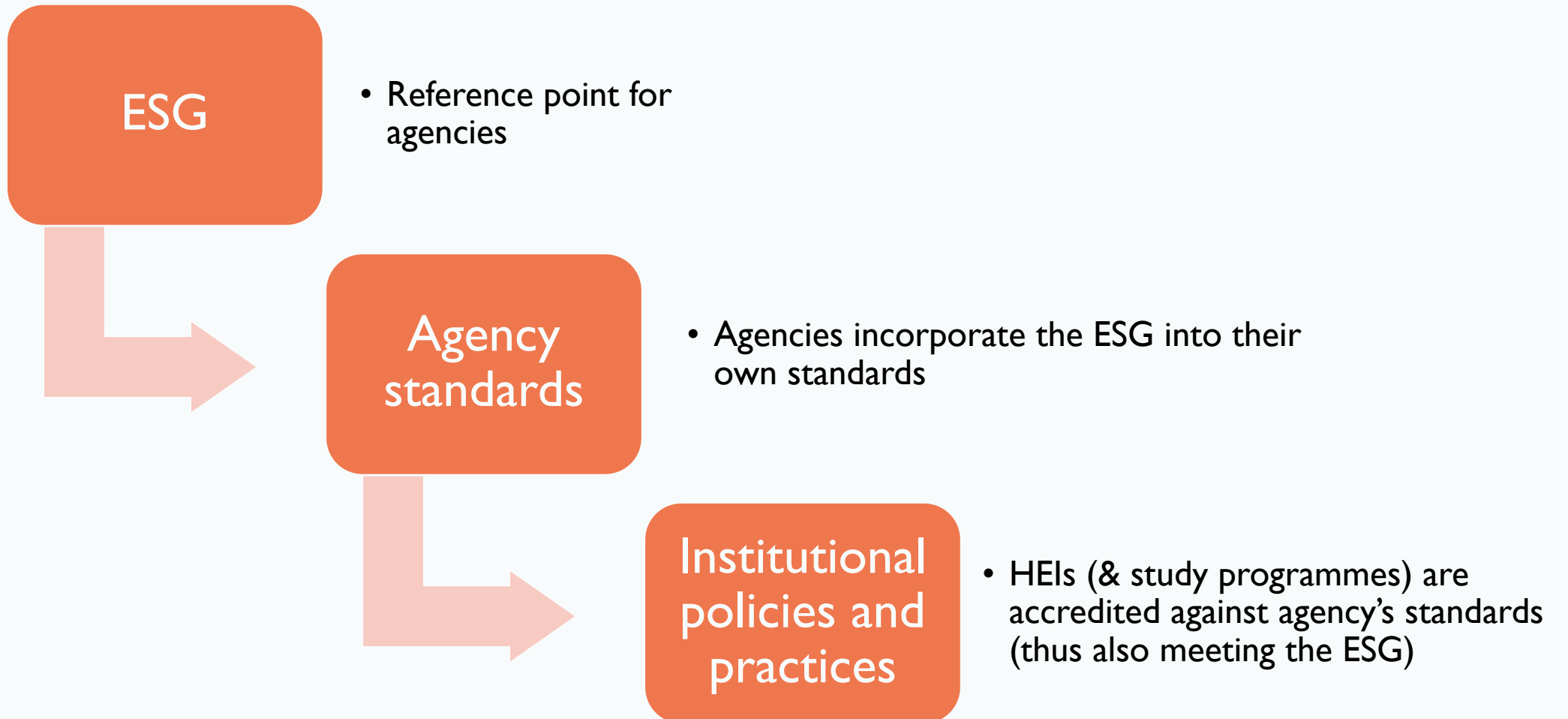
ESG IN BRIEF

- Introduction, followed by three parts:
  - Internal QA within HEIs
  - External QA carried by QAAs
  - Internal QA within QAAs

- Focus on quality assurance of higher education

- Principles for QA in the EHEA
  - HEIs have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance
  - QA responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students
  - QA supports the development of a quality culture
  - QA takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society

ESG 2015

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
in the European Higher Education Area

ESG IN PRACTICE

ESG
- Reference point for agencies

Agency standards
- Agencies incorporate the ESG into their own standards

Institutional policies and practices
- HEIs (& study programmes) are accredited against agency's standards (thus also meeting the ESG)

ESG: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT – ACTIVE STUDENT ROLE

- Introduction
- Internal QA
  - ESG 1.1 Policy for quality assurance
  - ESG 1.2 Design and approval of programmes
  - ESG 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
  - ESG 1.7 Information management
  - ESG 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
- External QA:
  - ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose
  - ESG 2.3 Implementing processes
  - ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts
  - ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

STUDENT ROLE IN ENQA REVIEW PANELS

- Student reviewers are full members of the ENQA review panel
- Nominated through European Students' Union (ESU)
- Need to be enrolled in HE at the time of the nomination and appointment
- Must complete ENQA reviewer training before appointment
- Bring the student perspective on quality assurance, ensuring peer-review values
- Work on equal footing with QA professionals and academics

ADDED VALUE OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION

- Enhances legitimacy, sustainability and diversity of the panel

- Strengthens focus on student-centered learning, teaching quality, and learner experience

- Promotes trust in external QA processes among student communities

- Contributes to balanced, evidence-based panel judgments

- Challenges:
  - Balancing student role with panel dynamics
  - Speaking up among senior experts
  - Dealing with technical/legal terminology

- Support measures:
  - Strong chair and secretary support, role of review coordinator
  - Clear preparatory materials and expectations, Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews
  - Inclusive communication practices within the panel

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Primary institutional responsibility for quality and assurance

- Two main approaches to internal QA
  - aligned with **strategic management**: QA as a means to support the achievement of institutional goals
  - explicitly linked to defining and assessing the **learning outcomes** and ensuring these are aligned to the national qualification framework

- **Quality culture** the aim, yet remains challenging. Involvement of all stakeholders crucial.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

- QA agencies ensure the sustainability of their procedures, standards and criteria by involving stakeholders such as students, academics, and industry representatives in their development and revision

- QA agencies cover different dimensions of sustainability in their external QA activities (e.g. standards and criteria) or through thematic work with institutions

QA OF JOINT PROGRAMMES
THE PROBLEM

How to assure the quality and recognition of a joint programme when it is subject to programme accreditation in one or more system?

The solution needed to:

- Avoid multiple QA procedures for a single programme

- Overcome the problem of different and/or contradictory national criteria

- Reflect the joint nature of the curriculum

THE SOLUTION

A specific European accreditation approach for joint programmes, based on the ESG, to be applied to all joint programmes that are subject to compulsory programme accreditation at national level.

- 2012: EHEA Ministers commissioned an expert group to draft a proposal
- 2013-15: drafting, consultation, revision
- 2015: EHEA Ministers approved the 'European Approach'

In parallel: EHEA Ministers committed to recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes

STANDARDS

1. Eligibility
2. Learning Outcomes
3. Study Programme
4. Admission and Recognition
5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment
6. Student Support
7. Resources
8. Transparency and Documentation
9. Quality Assurance

Based on the ESG but with specific points related to

- The 'jointness' of the programme: status, design and delivery, consistency
- Coordination arrangements: cooperation agreement, division of responsibilities
- Specific needs of mobile students: diversity, student support, documentation

PROCEDURE

1. Self-evaluation Report
2. Review Panel
3. Site Visit
4. Review Report
5. Formal Outcomes and Decision
6. Appeals
7. Reporting
8. Follow-up
9. Periodicity

Based on the ESG but with specific points related to

- Focus on the 'jointness' of the programme (in SAR and review report)
- International expertise of panel
- Location of site visit
- Report summary and decision in English
- Validity period of decision

APPLICATION: IN THEORY

1. Institutions that offer the programme select a suitable EQAR-registered QA agency

2. That agency conducts a single EQA procedure for the entire programme using the European Approach

3. The result/decision is recognised in all countries where the programme is offered

APPLICATION: IN PRACTICE

It's complicated!

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

- Not all systems recognise QA procedures and decisions by any EQAR-registered agency

- Many countries have different divisions of responsibilities for conducting the QA procedure and making the accreditation decision

- Not all agencies have experience in using the European Approach

- Joint programmes account for a relatively small portion of degrees in the EHEA

LOOKING FORWARD

- European Universities Initiative has given renewed attention and impetus to the European Approach

- Ongoing shift towards programme level external QA means fewer obstacles for joint programmes

BUT: legal frameworks in some countries remain the biggest challenge (i.e. non-alignment with Bologna commitments)

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