

**QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY REVIEWS AND CONSULTANCY VISITS:  
OPEN CALL FOR PARTICIPATION OF  
AFRICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES / GOVERNING BODIES OF QUALITY  
ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**The HAQAA2 Initiative announces a call for participation in the second round of pilot reviews of quality assurance agencies based upon the ASG-QA, as well as consultancy visits for other governing bodies of quality assurance in Africa which are building their QA systems**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Quality assurance in higher education is recognised as a key strategic area in the 2063 Agenda of the African Union, which prioritises a number of tools and measures for harmonising the African higher education sector and rendering it both local responsive and globally competitive. Higher education quality assurance collaboration, and harmonisation more generally, is also a successful area of collaboration under the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. The aim is to establish compatible structures and systems which would facilitate academic mobility and foster comparability of qualifications.

Support to achieve these aims was provided in 2015-2018 by the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative, funded by the European Union under the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. This Initiative facilitated the development of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance ([ASG-QA](#)) and a methodology for the peer review of external quality assurance agencies against the standards of Parts B and C of the ASG-QA. In 2018, teams of experts conducted four pilot reviews of national external quality assurance agencies and four consultancy visits to higher education ministries in five different African Union regions.

In order to continue the development and strengthening of external quality assurance in Africa, the second phase of the HAQAA Initiative (HAQAA2: 2020-2022) plans to coordinate a further **ten reviews of established external quality assurance agencies and five consultancy visits** to countries in which there is a newly established quality assurance agency or preparations are underway to set one up. The HAQAA2 implementing consortium is therefore pleased to launch this call for agencies and ministries to participate.

## THE APPROACH

The methodology takes an enhancement-led approach, supporting the self-improvement of quality assurance agencies through a reflective self-assessment exercise and a site visit by a team of quality assurance experts. The exercise will not function as a ranking or scoring tool or result in any formal consequences for the participating agencies and ministries.

The reviews will provide findings and recommendations to the participating agencies and ministries regarding their further development in line with the expectations of the ASG-QA. In parallel, it will further test the review methodology as well as promote awareness of the ASG-QA and other aspects of the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), contributing to the consolidation of quality culture and a transparent, harmonised approach to quality assurance in African higher education.

## ABOUT HAQAA2

The Harmonisation of African Higher Education, Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) is an initiative that has been established to support the development of a harmonised quality assurance and accreditation system at institutional, national, regional and Pan-African continental level. It is funded by the European Union Commission, in the context of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. Phase One (HAQAA1) was implemented from 2016 to 2018. Phase Two (2019 – 2022) is intended to build upon, upscale and promote the results of HAQAA1.

The specific objectives of HAQAA2 are:

- Enhancing quality assurance culture in higher education institutions
- Strengthening capacities of quality assurance agencies to implement the ASG-QA and to enhance cross-regional coordination
- Strengthening capacities of the AU in implementing the PAQAF

The HAQAA2 Initiative is implemented by the Global Observatory (GLOBALOBS, Consortium Leader), the Association of African Universities (AAU), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Further information and resources are available on the [HAQAA2 website](#).

## OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY AND ELIGIBILITY

This call seeks applicants for two types of exercises: agency reviews and consultancy visits.

### 1. AGENCY REVIEWS

#### OBJECTIVES

The pilot review will provide agencies an opportunity to be exposed to an external review for further development. The intention is also to contribute to the process of enhancing mutual recognition of accrediting decisions among quality assurance agencies in Africa, based on a shared understanding of how to perform external quality assurance and accreditation. The reviews will be at the same time a training opportunity for experts and agencies, who will gain first-hand experience in applying the ASG-QA via the agency review model.

The reviews have the following aims, to the benefit of participating agencies:

- Supporting the agency's general development and improvement
- Supporting the agency in adapting to and implementing the standards and guidelines of the ASG-QA

- Facilitating the implementation of transparent external quality assurance procedures that adhere to international norms
- Increasing the agency's visibility nationally and internationally

## METHODOLOGY

The agency review will consist of the following steps:

- **A self-assessment report produced by the agency**, in which it describes and critically reflects on its policies and practices. Specifically, the agency will detail how it meets the expectations set out in the standards of the ASG-QA Parts B and C.
- **A three-day site visit conducted by an international team of quality assurance experts**. The team will consist of two experts from Africa and one from Europe. If of interest to the agency, provisions may be made to additionally include a student representative on the team. The team will meet internal and external stakeholders to verify evidence and further explore issues raised in the self-assessment report.
- **A report by the review team outlining good practice and areas for improvement**. The report will also specifically assess the extent to which the agency's policies and practices are in line with the standards of the ASG-QA Parts B and C.

Selected staff of participating agencies will be invited to a **training seminar** to enhance their understanding of the ASG-QA and PAQAF, discuss the review methodology in more detail and support them in preparing for the review. An online de-briefing event will also be held to gather feedback from agencies about the review process.

It is hoped that the agency will use the outcomes of the review to support its further development. However, it is stressed that this is a voluntary exercise, and that there is no formal or legal consequence of the review.

Efforts will be made to support reviews in the four official African Union languages, if needed: English, French, Arabic or Portuguese.

## ELIGIBILITY

Established quality assurance agencies from any African region are eligible for a review. Agencies should have well established and independent external quality assurance activities and demonstrate interest in regional and African continental engagement.

Agencies that had a HAQAA review or a consultancy visit in 2018 are welcome to apply if they can demonstrate that significant developments have taken place since then and justify the motivation and need for a follow-up. In this case the review will take into account the findings of the previous review/consultancy visit and evaluate the progress made.

## **2. CONSULTANCY VISITS**

### OBJECTIVES

A consultancy visit is offered in countries where there the quality assurance agency is only recently established or the responsibility for quality assurance is still embedded in the ministry for education but there are plans in place to establish an independent agency.

The consultancy visits have the following aims, to the benefit of the participating agency/ministry:

- Supporting the establishment and early development of an independent quality assurance agency
- Supporting the agency/ministry in developing activities in line with the ASG-QA and facilitating the implementation of transparent external quality assurance procedures that adhere to international norms
- Raising awareness of the ASG-QA and PAQAF as well as international good practice in external quality assurance
- Facilitating discussion between stakeholders to better understand local needs and ensure that activities are fit-for-purpose

The HAQAA implementing team will discuss with the agency/ministry to refine the objectives and the programme for the site visit based on the specific needs of the agency/ministry.

### METHODOLOGY

The consultancy visit will consist of the following steps:

- **A self-assessment report produced by the agency/ministry**, in which it describes and critically reflects on its approach to external quality assurance and existing policies and practices. The agency/ministry will detail how it meets the expectations set out in some selected standards of the ASG-QA Parts B and C and/or how it plans to meet them as it develops the national quality assurance system.
- **A three-day site visit conducted by an international team of quality assurance experts**. The team will consist of two experts from Africa and one from Europe. The experts will meet with internal and external stakeholders to discuss local needs, opportunities for development and fitness-for-purpose of existing practices. Information and brainstorming sessions will be held to raise awareness of PAQAF and discuss development towards alignment with the ASG-QA.
- **A report by the review team outlining good practice, areas for further development** and if relevant, advice towards setting up an independent quality assurance agency. The report will put specific emphasis on alignment of activities with selected standards of the ASG-QA Parts B and C.

Participating agencies/ministries will be invited to a two-day **training seminar** to enhance their understanding of the ASG-QA and PAQAF, discuss the review methodology in more detail, and support them in preparing for the consultancy visit. An online de-briefing event will also be held to gather feedback from agencies/ministries about the consultancy visits.

It is hoped that the agency/ministry will use the outcomes of the consultancy to support its further development. However, it is stressed that this is a voluntary exercise, and that there is no formal or legal consequence of the review.

Efforts will be made to support reviews in the four official African Union languages, if needed: English, French, Arabic or Portuguese.

### ELIGIBILITY

Recently established quality assurance agencies or other bodies responsible for the development of external quality assurance, such as the Ministry of Education, from any African region are eligible for a consultancy visit.

Agencies or ministries that had a HAQAA consultancy visit in 2018 are not eligible for another consultancy visit. However, agencies may be eligible for a full review (see above).

### TIMEFRAME FOR CONSULTANCY VISITS AND PILOT REVIEWS

The reviews and consultancy visits are planned for the timeframe outlined below. However, the HAQAA implementing team are monitoring the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the timing and format of training events and site visits may be adjusted depending on the local circumstances and international travel restrictions.

July-September 2020: Application period

End September 2020: Selection of participating agencies/ministries by the HAQAA implementing team

October-November 2020: Agreement on Terms of Reference and other contractual documents, including refining specific needs/objectives for consultancy visits

December 2020: Training seminar (two days) for participating agencies/ministries

January-June 2021: Preparation of self-assessment reports by participating agencies/ministries

July 2021: Submission of self-assessment reports to the expert teams and HAQAA implementing team

September-December 2021: Site visits by expert teams to participating agencies/ministries

March 2022: Expert teams submit reports to participating agencies/ministries and the HAQAA implementing team

### RESPONSIBILITIES AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Selected agencies/ministries must commit to the following responsibilities:

- Providing a contact person to liaise with the HAQAA implementing team and expert team for all aspects of the review/consultancy visit
- Allocating sufficient resources for all stages of the review/consultancy visit
- Participation of two staff members in the training seminar
- Preparation of the self-assessment report
- Providing the expert team with any additional documentation they may request
- Planning and organising the programme and logistics for the site visits, in collaboration with the HAQAA implementing team and the expert team. This includes:
  - Agreeing the programme of meetings/interviews in advance and inviting participants to attend
  - Providing recommendations for accommodation for the expert team
  - Arranging local transport for the expert team (transfer between airport, hotel and meeting venues)
  - Arranging meeting rooms
  - Arranging catering during the meetings (lunches and coffee breaks)
- Attending an online de-briefing meeting to provide feedback on the review/consultancy visit

There is no fee for participating in an agency review or consultancy visit. The HAQAA Initiative will cover the costs of the expert teams conducting the site visits. This includes their honorarium, flight, hotel and per diem. The HAQAA Initiative will also cover the travel and accommodation of staff from agencies/ministries to attend the training seminar.

The participating agency/ministry should cover the following resources and costs:

- Staff time implicated in attending the training seminar, preparing the self-assessment report, and organising and hosting the site visit.
- Local transportation for the expert team during the site visit.

#### APPLICATION PROCESS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection of agencies/ministries to participate in reviews and consultancy visits will be made by the HAQAA implementing team (representatives of GLOBALOBS, AAU, DAAD and ENQA). In making the selection, the HAQAA implementing team will consider the following:

- The organisation's motivation and commitment to participate in the exercise
- Whether the organisation's expectations match what the review/consultancy visit can realistically offer
- The diversity of the selected organisations (geographic and language representation and level of development)

Interested agencies and ministries are asked to submit an application form (see annex). The application should be signed by the legal representative of the organisation.

Applications and any questions should be sent by email to Anna Gover: [anna.gover@enqa.eu](mailto:anna.gover@enqa.eu). Applications may be submitted in English, French or Portuguese.

**The deadline for applications is 11 September 2020.**