African Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education in ASG-QA

Presented at
Training of QAAs – HAQAA 2 Initiative

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14th June, 2021, Zoom Presentation

HAQAA2
Harmonisation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance in African Higher Education

This initiative is implemented on behalf of the European and African Union Commissions by:

OBREAL GLOBAL

DAAD Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst German Academic Exchange Service

enqa.
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   Africa's Developmental Challenges

In spite of developments made so far – there is need for:

a) Skills and capacities to promote and preserve democratic institutions - address -

- Internal and regional conflicts;
- Poor governance and corruption;
- Injudicious use of resources;

b) High level and skilled human capacity – leverage on opportunities of increased globalization;

c) Knowledge and skills to take advantage of developments in technology;

These are resident in HE !!!!!.

1.2   Some Challenges of Africa's HE

a) Increasing access - ensuring relevance & quality

b) Governance issues – poor succession plans.

c) Inadequate Funding – injudicious use of resources .

d) Number and qualification of academic staff .

e) Inadequate Research funding.

f) A shift to market/consumer demands - quality of academic programmes .

g) Increased competition from globalisation and internalisation.

h) Quality of Online mode of delivery .

Africa and its HE -

- Must take charge of its own destiny

- Unleash its potential - become self-reliant in its HE provision –

1.3 Addressing the Challenges in HE

For improved quality in HE we need:

a) ***Good governance – strategic*** succession plans – for continued improvement.

b) ***Collaboration*** and ***sharing of resources*** – judicious use of resources between institutions (locally & internationally).

c) ***Student and staff exchange*** and international cooperation.

d) ***Common agendas in HE*** – for improved quality.

e) To ***take advantage of technological*** developments.

f) ***Collaboration*** in academic activities and research.

g) ***Quality system*** that inculcate a ***culture of evidence-based*** quality.

h) ***Harmonised quality assurance system -*** that meets the needs of Africa's higher education.

1.4   Why Harmonised QA System in Africa?

a) *Realisation* of advantage of harmonised HE systems for *mobility* of human resource and students.

b) Increased *attention* paid to *quality* & *QA* in HE.

c) *Rapid growth of HEIs & graduates* - focus on quality and employability – QA is central topic in HE.

d) *Diverse systems of HE* – challenges of recognition of degrees – constrains academic integration & student mobility – harmonised HE required.

e) *AU Vision* – An Integrated Africa - for *Intra-Africa mobility* & *skills portability -* requires harmonised education system.

f) *Continental Strategy for Africa* (CESA) - realisation of *intra-Africa mobility and academic integration through regional integration and cooperation* – requires "harmonised education & training systems.

1.5   Actions Towards Harmonised QA in HE in Africa

- AU's *Agenda 2063* – "The Africa We Want" calls for *harmonisation of HE* - locally relevant and globally competitive.

- *Africa's Heads of States and Governments –* committed to harmonization of quality assurance processes and mechanisms.

- *AUC promoting harmonisation* through the *Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework* (*PAQAF*).

- *AUC* working with African HEIs (AAU), supported by EU and its HEIs to harmosie quality standards and practices in HE.

Note: Harmonisation – Not uniformity – but is having shared values on quality criteria and standards, equivalent quality assessment.

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2. The PAQAF

a) Initiated and *commissioned* - 2016.

b) An *overriding framework* – ensure commitments to harmonised quality assurance in Africa – Comprise:

2.1 AQRM - African Quality Rating Mechanism

a) Endorsed by AU in 2007, revised in 2014 and 2017.

b) Piloted in 2010;

c) Used in Rating HEIs - 9 in 2014 and 15 in 2017.

d) Holistic review to be undertaken and methodology for virtual verification – to enable data driven policy development.

e) Available in AU languages.

2.2 Addis Convention For Recognition of Studies

a) Adopted in 2014, Came into force December 2019.

b) Available in AU languages.

2.3 African Credit Accumulation Transfer System

a) Developed by TUNING Africa Initiative

b) Pending endorsement by AU.

2.4   ACQF - African Continental Qualifications   Framework.

- Launched in 2019 - key output - "skills for youth employment project" (SYNEP).

2.5   Continental Agency

- TWG under HAQAA 2 carrying out feasibility study on the set up of the Agency.

- Continental Register for quality assured *QAAs* and HEIs

2.6   *ASG-QA* – African Standards and Guidelines for   Quality Assurance in Higher Education

- Finalised in 2018.

- Published in January 2019 – 4 AU languages.

- Under HAQAA 2 - Taskforce working on User's guide

3. The ASG-QA

3.1 What are ASG-QA

- Standards and Guidelines for *internal and external QA* in HE.

- *Standards* – stated as common *minimum* requirements.

- **Guidelines** - more *specific* **–** for collection of evidence of quality.

- Premised on **existing QA standards and guidelines** in African countries and regional bodies/networks

- *Benchmarked* with existing international standards and guidelines.

- *Not prescriptive* –allow quality enhancement in HEIs and QAAs.

- *Not exhaustive* – adapt to suit national context.

- *Broad* enough to allow for diversity, yet *safeguarding comparability*.

- Examples of *best practice.*

3.2   Aims and Purpose of ASG-QA

ASG-QA supports good practices for QA via development of:

a) *Common framework* and *understanding* of QA among stakeholders –continental, regional, and national levels.

b) *Mutual trust* - facilitates recognition and mobility of students and human resources.

c) *Quality improvement/enhancement mechanism -* self-assessment, external review and continuous M & E.

d) *Transparency and accountability* - providing appropriate information to the public.

e) *Sustainable quality culture* in HEIs.

f) *International competitiveness* of Africa's HE system.

3.3   Principles and Methodologies

Principles

a) ASG-QA - based on the existing **common principles of QA**.

b) Quality and QA are primarily the **responsibility of HEIs (accountability)**.

c) The **autonomy, identity and integrity of HEIs** are acknowledged and respected.

d) HEIs and QAAs can **adapt the standards** and guidelines to their **HE system** and **context**.

Methodologies

a) Subjected to wide consultation for acceptability

b) Benchmarked with best practices.

3.4   Drafting Process

a) Drafting Team

- The Technical Working Group (TWG) part of HAQAA 1 – drawn from:
  - ✓Eastern, Western, Southern, Northern, and Central Africa.
  - ✓European Higher Education Area (EHEA) – Benchmarking and technical support.
  - ✓European Association for QA in HE (ENQA) – Coordination.
  - ✓Advisory Board of HAAQA Initiative (AU) - Provided regular advise and support.
- All 4 AU languages – **English, French, Portuguese, Arabic** represented in TWG.

b) Benchmarking

Benchmarked with:

- Existing standards and guidelines in use in African countries
  - ✓ Mapping Matrix showed high level of similarities
  - ✓ 37 African countries have QAAs (2019) -
  - ✓ Others are in the process of development.

- Existing Standards of Regional QA bodies and Networks:
  - ✓ East Africa - IUCEA;
  - ✓ Southern Africa - SADC, SAQAN;
  - ✓ North Africa - Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE);
  - ✓ Francophone countries – The African and Malagache Council for Higher Education (CAMES).

- International Standards
  - ✓ European Higher Education Area (ESG).
  - ✓ INQAAHE.

c) *Consultation with Stakeholders*

i. **AUC and Advisory Board of HAQAA** - Final March 2018, Maputo, Mozambique.

ii. **Vice Chancellors of HEIs** - 14th AAU General Conference, June 2017, Ghana.

iii. **Online Consultations** – Between June – August 2017 – over 310 Responses, from 40 countries – HEIs, QAAs, Student Organisations, MOE.

iv. **Stakeholders of HE** - 9th International Conference and Workshops on QA in HE in Africa (ICQAHEA), September 2017, Accra, Ghana.

v. **HAQAA 1 Training Course** - Staff from QAAs of African 41 countries.

vi. **Final HAQAA 1 Stakeholders Consultation** Workshop November 2017, Addis – HEIs, QAAs, MOE, Africa Student Unions, Regional and continental governments (AUC, SADC, ECOWAS, EAC, ECCAS.

The Feed back were very good - incorporated into the ASG-QA.

d) *Current Status of ASG-QA*

- Methodology for ***External Review of QAAs*** –developed (for Parts B and C):
    - ✓ Piloted on 4 matures systems - ***Egypt, Senegal , Zimbabwe, Mozambique***
    - ✓ Consultancy for 4 QAA – on ***Morocco, Mali, Togo, Cameroon***

- Initial Mapping of ASQ-QA and AQRM done - for complementarity – support each other.

- Published - January 2019 I 4 AU languages

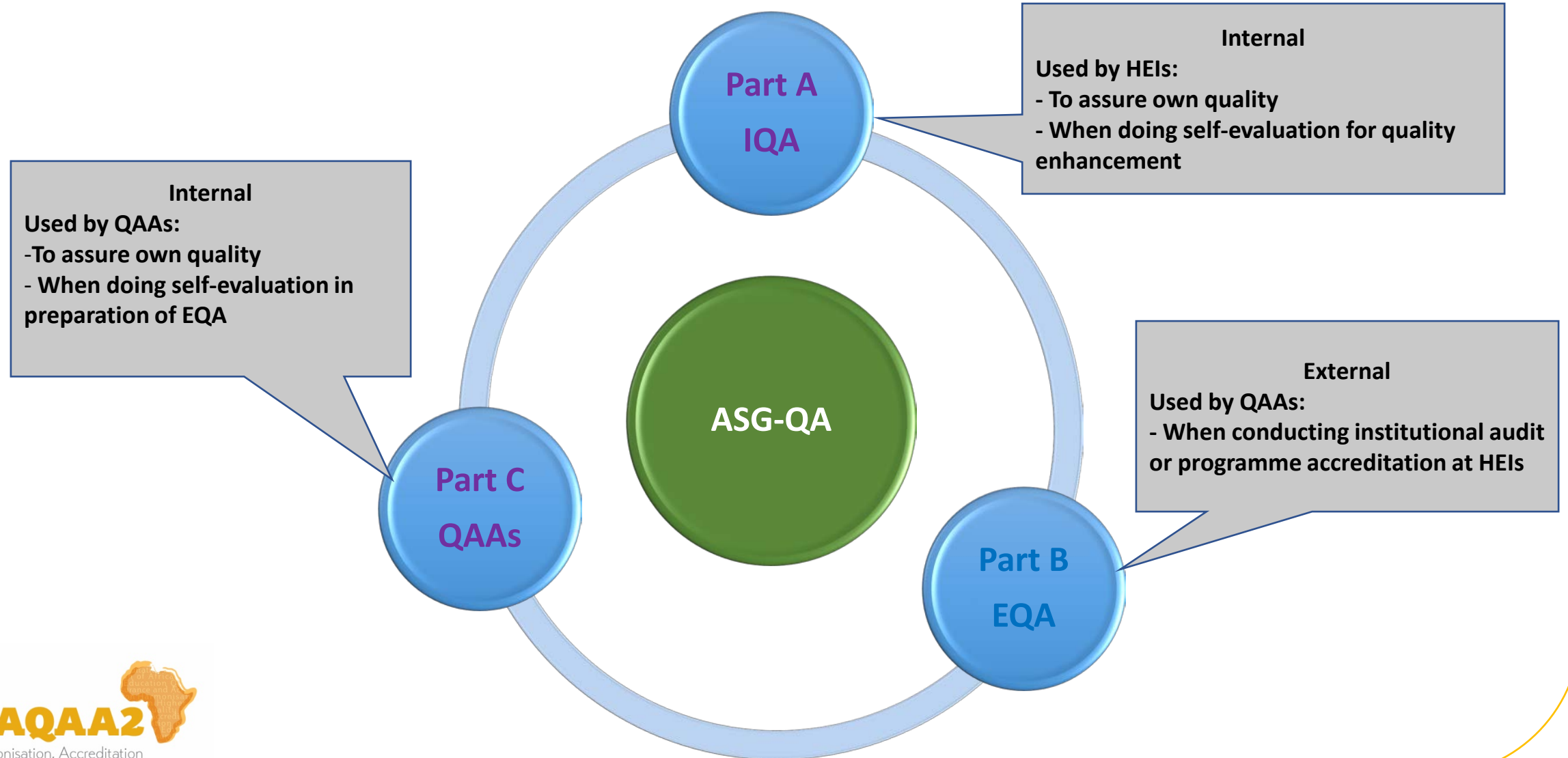- Awaiting formal political endorsement.

- ***Find at:***

https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/african-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-higher-education-asg-qa/

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3.5   Scope of ASG-QA

- **Applicability -** All types of HEIs in Africa, irrespective of mode of delivery and QAA.

- Takes cognisance of existing **QFs and CATS., and AQRM**.

- **ASG-QA in Three Parts:**
  - **Part A**: Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) of HEIs (including QA for ODL).
  - **Part B**: External Quality Assurance (EQA) – Methodologies for EQA.
  - **Part C**: Internal QA for QAAs.

NB: The 3 parts - interlinked - together form the basis for an *African Quality Assurance Framework.*

3.6   ASG-QA Parts - Inter-Linkage

Internal
Used by HEIs:
- To assure own quality
- When doing self-evaluation for quality enhancement

Internal
Used by QAAs:
- To assure own quality
- When doing self-evaluation in preparation of EQA

External
Used by QAAs:
- When conducting institutional audit or programme accreditation at HEIs

Part A
IQA

Part C
QAAs

ASG-QA

Part B
EQA

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Part A: Standards and Guidelines for IQA of HEIs

The 13 standards and guidelines (Ensure HEIs are responsible for their quality - Incorporate ODEL) - Cover:

1. Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives

2. Governance and Management

3. Human Resources

4. Financial Resource Management

5. Infrastructure and Facilities

6. Student Recruitment, Admission, Certification and Support Services

7. Design, Approval , Monitoring and Evaluation of Study Programmes

8. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

9. Research and Innovation

10. Community Engagement

11. Information Management

12. Public Communication

13. Cooperation, Staff and Student Mobility

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Standard 5.   Infrastructure and Facilities

Standard

The institution shall have adequate and appropriate infrastructure, facilities and resources to support teaching, learning and research.

Guidelines

The institution has:

a)   Adequate **academic, administrative and recreational** facilities;

b)   **Properly organised Library** - equipped with physical and electronic facilities and resources for students and staff;

c)   Adequate **ICT infrastructure** – dedicated connectivity;

d)   Facilities **conform to national health and safety standards**; and

e)   Facilities accessible for **persons with disabilities**.

Guidelines Continued …….

In case of *E-learning* the institution ensures:

a) Sufficient **infrastructure for technical support** –
  - Server space,
  - Redundancy or load balancing,
  - Technical help desk,
  - Reliable internet access,
  - Reliable technical services – back-up and remote services, and
  - Resources to develop knowledge and skills of ICT practitioners.

Guidelines continued……….

b) That it has an **ICT plan** for purposes of:
- Maintaining & **upgrading** technologies; and
- Ensuring *reliability*, *privacy*, *safety* and *security*.

c) There is **consistency and coherency of technical framework** for students and staff - minimise impact of change in technology:
- Clear *structure of communicating changes* in software programmes, hardware or technical system,
- *Training* programme/process for students and staff for new software or for any new system,
- *Access to training* for off-campus or virtual students, and
- *Learning policy* on new software when students or tutors proceed from one course to another

Guidelines continued………….

d) That hardware, software and technical support system are important to e-learning, hence HEI has:

- A help desk 24/7,
- System for monitoring and supporting a range of hardware and software,
- Clearly stated technical expectations, and
- A system for FAQs – assessed and feedback given to students.

Part B: Standards and Guidelines for External Quality Assurance

The ***methodologies*** (or standards) used by QAAs for external quality assurance (EQA) of HEIs -

a) QAAs subject themselves to ***periodic external assessment***.

b) ***Takes into account*** the standards and guidelines in ***Part A*** (IQA) for HEIs,

c) ***Ensures IQA is relevant*** to and is efficient for the concerned HEIs.

d) Ensures ***consistency between*** IQA by institutions themselves and EQA.

Areas Covered – 7 Standards

1. Objectives of EQA and Consideration for IQA

2. Designing EQA Mechanisms Fit-For- Purpose

3. Implementation Processes of EQ

4. Independence of Evaluation

5. Decision and Reporting of EQA Outcomes

6. Periodic Review of Institutions and Programmes

7. Complaints and Appeals

Examples

Standard 4. Independence of Evaluation

Standard

EQA shall be carried out by Panels of external experts / peer reviewers drawn from a wide range of expertise and experience.

Guidelines

a)   Experts are drawn from **academics, students, employers or professional practitioners, and students**;

b)   To ensure **professionalism, consistency and transparency** of output of experts it is necessary that they -

    i.   Are **carefully selected**,

    ii.   Have appropriate **skills and are competent to perform task assigned them,**

    iii.   Are adequately **inducted on EQA principles** and **procedures** before undertaking external review,

    iv.   Are **independent** in their judgements about the quality of programme /institution,

    v.   Have no-conflict-of-interest in the institution or programme they are evaluating, and

    vi.   Sign a Declaration of Independence and No Conflict of Interest Form.

Guidelines Continued…….

b) In the case of possible conflict of interest, the institution is given the opportunity to **object** to any member of the proposed Review Panel; and

c) Involvement of **international experts** - is good practice in EQA.

Standard 5. Decision and Reporting of EQA Outcomes

Standard

Reports and decisions made as a result of EQA shall be clear, based on published standards, processes and procedures and made accessible for purposes of *accountability.*

Guidelines

The decisions of EQA have significant impact on institutions and programmes - it is critical that:

a) EQA decisions are **published** without undermining the integrity of the review process;

b) The **EQA reports** are the **basis for follow-up** actions - clear and precise (Include Purpose, Context, Procedures, Evidence, Experts involved, Analysis and Findings, Commendations, recommendations and follow-up actions), and conclusions;

Guidelines continued……..

c) The **institution is given an opportunity to point out factual errors** to ensure accuracy of the report;

d) The **institution is the first to receive the EQA report** in the interest of transparency and fairness;

e) The **decisions taken by the responsible are not subject to external influences; and**

f) The **decisions are in a format that known** to the institutions concerned.

Standard 7.   Complaints and Appeals

Standard

Procedure for lodging complaints and appeals shall be clearly defined and communicated to the institution concerned.

Guidelines

In order to **safeguard the rights** of the institutions and to **ensure fairness** in the decision making process, it is critical that:

a) There is an established **Appeals System;**

b) The Institution is allowed to **raise issues** of concern consistent with the appeals system;

c) There is a **procedure for addressing complaints** raised by the general public;

d) There are **clearly defined** complaints and appeals processes and procedures which are **consistently applied**; and

e) Appeals and complaints are handled **professionally,** within an agreed **period of time**.

Part C: Internal Quality Assurance for Quality Assurance Agencies

For purposes of IQA of QAAs - self-assessment of **policies, practices, procedures and activities;** and/or for **external assessment**/evaluation by another body/peer organisation.

Areas Covered:

1. Legal Status
2. Vision and Mission Statement
3. Governance and Management
4. Independence of QAA
5. Policies, Processes and Activities
6. Internal Quality Assurance
7. Financial and Human Resources
8. Benchmarking, Networking and Collaboration
9. Periodic Review of QAAs

Examples

Standard 4.   Independence of QAA

Standard

The QAA shall be independent in its operations, outcomes, judgements and decisions.

Guidelines

The QAA makes **independent decisions and judgements** that are not subject to change by third parties:

- *Organisational independence* –Official documentation - Acts or Statutes, stipulate independence of QAA from third parties (e.g. HEIs, governments, other stakeholders).

- *Operational independence -* definitions and operations of the QAA's procedures and methods, nomination and appointment of qualified external experts (no objection provision).

- *Independence of formal outcomes* –final decision of QA activity remains the responsibility of the QAA!!!!.

Standard 8.   Benchmarking, Networking and Collaboration

Standard

The QAA shall promote and participate in international initiatives, workshops and conferences on quality assurance to exchange and share experiences and best practices.

Guidelines

QAA remains relevant in its activities through:

a) **Collaborates** with all competent bodies for QA and accreditation;

b) **Shares** information - accurate, reliable and easily accessible - on criteria and standards for quality assurance activities;

c) **Contributes to the development** of appropriate regional and other international conventions (e.g. REQ) and serves as national or regional information centres as appropriate;

d) **Participates in bilateral or multilateral agreements** for facilitating the recognition or determination of equivalences of each country's qualifications and

e) **Contributes to** regional and international efforts to improve the accessibility of up-to-date **information on recognised HEIs**.

Standard 9.   Periodic Review of QAAs

Standard

The QAA shall undergo periodic internal and external review for continuous improvement.

Guidelines

The QAA has a system for continuous QA of own practices and activities, to ensure flexibility in changes in HE and effectiveness, therefore:

a) Conducts a comprehensive **internal self-assessment** of its practices and activities periodically, including data analysis,

b) Subjects itself to periodic **external review** on the basis of the self-assessment; by regional, continental or international QA bodies;

c) Ensures that required **recommendations are disclosed and implemented** for improvement; and

d) Depending on the context of the QA system, the cyclical review is carried out preferably **every 5 years**.

3.7   Implementation and Ownership of ASG-QA

a)   **Political endorsement** of ASG-QA at highest level of AU.

b)   **Advocacy** of the ASG-QA by through National QAAs to ensure implementation.

c)   QAAs **Maping ASG-QA** against their standards and Guidelines for complementarity – give feedback to AUC.

d)   Establishment of **Coordinating Body at AU** level – with clear working relationships/collaborations with national QAAS and regional Networks.

e)   Development of **a Register of externally reviewed HEIs and QAAS** using ASG-QA (upholding quality) – part of coordinating body.

In Summary:

It is envisioned that ASG-QA will facilitate good practice of quality culture in existing QAAs and HEIs.

And establishment of QAAs in countries where they do not exist.

HAQAA 2, PAQAF and the ASG-QA will facilitate development of a harmonised sustainable quality culture in Africa for a competitive continental HE.

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4. Comparison Between ASG-QA and ESG

ASG-QA - Part A: IQA for HEIs	ESG – Part 1: IQA for HEIs	
1. Vision, Mission, and Strategic Objectives	1. Policy for Quality Assurance	
2. Governance and Management	2. Design and approval of programmes	
3. Human Resources	3 Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment	
4. Financial Resource Management	4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	
5. Infrastructure and Facilities	5. Teaching Staff	
6. Student Recruitment, Admission, Certification and Support Services	6. Learning Resources and Student Support	
7. Design, Approval, Monitoring and Evaluation of Study Programmes	7. Information Management	
8. Teaching, Learning and Assessment	8. Public Information	
9. Research and Innovation	9. On-Going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes	
10. Community Engagement	10. Cyclical External Quality Assurance	
11. Information Management System		
12. Public Communication		
13. Cooperation, Staff and Student Mobility		

Comparison continued…..

ASG-QA - Part B: For EQA	ESG – Part 2: Part B: For EQA EQA (2015)	
1. Objectives of EQA and Consideration for IQA	1. Consideration of IQA	
2. Designing EQA Mechanisms Fit-for-Purpose	2. Designing Methodologies fit-for-Purpose	
3. Implementation Processes of EQA	3. Implementation Processes	
4. Independence of Evaluation	4. Peer – Review Experts	
5. Decision and Reporting of EQA Outcomes	5. Criteria for Outcomes	
6. Periodic Review of Institutions and Programmes	6. Reporting	
7. Complaints and Appeals	7. Complaints and Appeals	

African Higher Education

5. Comparison Between ASG-QA, ESG and INQAAHE Guidelines

ASG-QA - Part C: IQA For QAA	ESG – Part 3: Part B: For QAAs	INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice
1. Legal and Status	1. Activities, Policy and Processes for QA	1. Objectives of the Agency
2. Vision and Mission Statements	2. Official Status	2. The Relationship between the EQAA and HEIs
3. Governance and Management	3. Independence	3. Decision-Making
4. Independence of QAA	4. Thematic Analysis	4. The External Committees
5. Policies, Processes and Activities	5. Resources	5. The Public Face
6. Internal Quality Assurance	6. IQA and Professional Conduct	6. Documentation
7. Financial and Human Resources	7. Complaints and Appeals	7. Resources
8. Benchmarking, Networking and Collaboration		8. Systems of Appeal
9. Periodic Review of QAAs		9. Quality Assurance of the EQAA
		10. Collaboration with other agencies
		11. Transnational Higher Education

6. Comparison Continued

Global Standards:

- Few and general in nature – Tend to be guidelines.
- Address highly complex HE contexts.
  - ✓ INQAAHE – 11 (one set).

Continental Standards and Guidelines

- More detailed than global ones
- Address moderately complex HE contexts than global guidelines.
  - ✓ ASG-QA = 29 (In 3 Parts)
  - ✓ ESG = 24 (In 3 Parts)

National Standards and Guidelines

- Tend to be detailed and more in number than Continental ones.
- Address Less complex HE contexts.
- Check if your country's Standards and Guidelines incorporates - ASG-QA