



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE



Summary report of aq agency reviews and support and advisory visits

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1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The HAQAA initiative¹ was adopted to support the development of a harmonised quality assurance and accreditation system in African higher education which is recognised as a key strategic thrust of the African Union's Agenda 2063. Overall, as part of this policy, one of the goals is to establish higher education structures and systems that would promote the comparability of qualifications, academic mobility and professional insertion.

The first phase of pilot agency assessments and consultancy visits took place in 2018 under the HAQAA1 initiative. This exercise involved a test phase of the ASA-QA², with reviews of four existing national quality assurance agencies³ and consultancy visits to four other countries⁴ that were working to establish national quality assurance agencies. The second phase of assessments under the HAQAA2 initiative, which took place in 2022, aimed to further test the methodology for assessing quality assurance agencies, taking into account improvements made as a result of HAQAA1 feedback. The main objective of these assessments was to intensify intra-regional coordination and strengthen the capacity of the quality assurance agencies to implement ASG-QA. Although this phase took place in the pandemic context, which led to a methodological adjustment for the visits (in hybrid mode for some), these pilot evaluations and support visits of the HAQAA project made it possible to analyze the relevance of the ASG-QA on a sample of African agencies and ministries while respecting the steps of an external evaluation. It was found that these standards can be applied in diverse and changing environments, even when face-to-face activities are not possible, since online practices are already integrated.

This report is part of the Phase Two of the HAQAA Initiative. It synthesizes and analyzes the results of these exercises with a view to informing future use of the review methodology and identifying additional guidance needed for the use of ASG-QA by quality assurance agencies. It attempts, when available, to highlight case examples (among the agencies visited) that can inspire other agencies/departments in the development of their quality assurance policies and methodologies, and to give visibility to good practices.

This document is based on the analysis of the external review reports (evaluations or consultancy), produced by the experts, which include the analysis of the self-evaluation reports, the results of the surveys and the interviews conducted with the identified stakeholders. Also, it is structured accordingly:

- The first part presents the methodology used and examines its different stages: the motivation and preparation of the quality assurance agencies/departments, the preparation by the coordinating body (ENQA, on behalf of the HAQAA Implementing Team), the site visits, and the comments on the external reports, particularly with regard to alignment with the recommendations.
- The second part analyzes the use and understanding of Parts B and C of the ASG-QA by agencies/departments and expert panels. Findings from the experts' visits and additional comments regarding the compliance of practices with the ASG-QA are highlighted.

1. Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation of African Higher Education 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 2016-2018. More information is available here: <https://haqaa.aau.org/>

2. The ASG-QA are available here in four languages (ENG, FR, PT, AR): <https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/>

3. ANAQ-Sup Senegal; CNAQ Mozambique; NAQAAE Egypt; ZIMCHE Zimbabwe

4. AMAQ-Sup Mali; ANAEQ Morocco; Togo; Cameroon

- The third section highlights trends in recommendations and challenges facing participating agencies and departments with an analysis focused on the ASG-QA as benchmarks.
- The paper concludes with some general comments and suggestions for improving current and/or future practices of departmental agencies and organizations.

2. METHODOLOGY

The external evaluation of the individual agencies selected was conducted in accordance with the process described in the HAQAA2 project's «Methodology for External Evaluation of Quality Assurance Agencies» document. The methodology for the agency reviews and consultancy visits takes an improvement-oriented approach, supported through a structured self-assessment exercise and an on-site visit by a team of quality assurance experts. The exercise does not function as a ranking or rating tool and there are no formal consequences for participating agencies and departments. Each agency/ministry is reviewed against Parts B and C of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) with recommendations and conclusions.

2.1. Organisations visited

The reviews are conducted with functional quality assurance agencies, while the consultancy visits are conducted with newly created quality assurance agencies or with national authorities where responsibility for quality assurance which are still integrated into the ministry of higher education, but where there are plans to create an independent agency. For the agencies that volunteered for this exercise, the motivations were diverse, but often driven by a need to have an external (more objective) view of current practices in order to initiate a process of progress. In addition, some agencies wanted to verify the conformity of their practices with the requirements of the ASG-QA standard, because they aspire to be part of the CESA continental education strategy of Agenda 2063 and to improve the quality of higher education and gain international recognition. This voluntary commitment will help to consolidate the good practices observed to encourage and advance the assessment teams and increase mutual trust with stakeholders.

Agencies or other quality assurance organizations were selected according to the following steps:

- HAQAA call for applications;
- Submission of applications by countries;
- Selection and sending of notifications to the structures of the selected countries.

In total, seven (7) agencies were to be visited (see table below): one full agency review⁵ (Mali), and six consultancy visits. All visits were conducted in hybrid mode (face-to-face and distance learning), except for the Algerian agency (CIAQES) and the Angolan agency (INAAREES), for which the visits were conducted face-to-face. That said, at the time of writing, the DRC visit had not yet taken place, but the self-evaluation report had been received and the expert team prepared. It should also be noted that South Sudan, Malawi, and Botswana were originally selected for the agency reviews, but had to withdraw from the process due to staffing changes and human resource limitations.

5. This agency, AMAQ-SUP, was previously contracted in 2018 for a consultancy visit in Phase 1 of the HAQAA project

Table 1. List of organizations visited

Agency Commission	Country	Date of creation	Benchmarks used for in-country activities	Activities of the experts during the visits	Dates of the visits	Mode of the visit
AMAAQ-ES	Mauritania	04/03/2021	Nationals	Support and advice	June 13-16, 2022	Hybrid
AMAAQ-SUP	Mali	27/06/2018	Nationals	Evaluation	June 28-30, 2022	Hybrid
CIAQES	Algeria	31/05/2010	Nationals	Support and advice	June 27-29, 2022	Presential
ANAAQ-GN	Guinea	12/01/2017	Nationals	Support and advice	July 20-22, 2022	Hybrid
EQB	Ivory Coast	2016	Nationals	Support and advice	July 25-28, 2022	Hybrid
INAAREES	Angola	29/10/2013	Nationals	Support and advice	Nov. 16-18, 2022	Presential
ANAAQ-ESU	Democratic Republic of Congo	2018	Nationals	Support and advice	Feb. 6-8, 2023	Hybrid

2.2. Preparation of the visited organisations

The most important phase for the agencies/departments was to conduct the self-assessment and send the report to the experts to prepare for their visit. An important part of the preparation was also to collect documented information as evidence for the self-assessment report, which was to be sent first. Many documents were provided (by email or during the site visit) depending on the type of agency (agency or ministry): laws, regulations, decrees, legal texts for the creation of the agency, appointment of its members, minutes of meetings with higher education institutions, standards used, etc.

ENQA, the HAQAA2 implementing partner that coordinated this activity, conducted several online training sessions in March-May 2022 for both agencies and countries preparing for visits. Topics covered included understanding ASG-QA, preparing a self-assessment, good practices for preparing site visits, and assessment protocols.

In fact, some experts organised one or more online meetings with representatives of the organisations prior to the site visit to establish initial contact between the two parties, to clarify certain concepts, to request additional documents, and to share and validate the interview schedule. The stakeholders participating in the interviews were often identified beforehand (in agreement with the experts).

Also, all respondents to the agency/department survey indicated that the self-evaluation process was useful, and several mentioned, in particular, the benefits of having to identify and reflect on the agency's strengths and weaknesses before the external evaluation. At the same time, experts indicated that they were generally satisfied with the quality of the activity reports as a starting point for the reviews.

2.3. Expert preparation and document review

Experts were selected by the coordinating body based on the previous external quality assurance experience under HAQAA1. They were selected from a list of HAQAA quality assurance experts and from members of the Technical Working Group that drafted the ASG-QA.

The expert panels were composed to include two experts from Africa and one from Europe, each bringing a

different perspective, but sharing the ASG-QA as a common starting point. The importance of an appropriate panel composition that ensures diversity of background and expertise was stressed, as well as complementarity (including, importantly, cultural and contextual knowledge). The importance of including a minimum of one woman on each panel was also considered.

Although the HAQAA2 Team valued the role of students in the process, no students were included in the expert panels due to budgetary and logistical reasons. Going forward, it would be useful to introduce this into future agency assessment missions to align with international best practices for active student participation in quality assurance.

For each panel, one expert was designated as chairman and another as secretary. The experts took advantage of the online preparatory meetings to get to know each other better in order to better divide the work among them in terms of skills and interests. In this regard, the experts stressed the importance of preparatory meetings prior to the field visits, not only to prepare for the review, but also to establish working relationships and develop a sense of shared responsibility for all aspects of the mission (preparation, interviews and reports).

The coordinating agency (ENQA) provided guidelines and instructions to the experts and two online training sessions. The training covered understanding the ASG-QA, the review methodology, best practices for analyzing the self-assessment report, conducting interviews, and writing the external review report. In addition, the experts were able to draw on their existing experience in conducting external reviews, as many had participated in the 2018 HAQAA1 reviews and consultancy visits and in the development of the ASG-QA.

Prior to the visits, the experts had an online meeting with the person in charge of overseeing the assessments and consultancy visits within the HAQAA2 initiative. During this online meeting, the HAQAA2 manager recalled the objectives and purpose of the support visit. She also ensured that all relevant documents that should be consulted during the visit were received. The experts had the opportunity to ask questions and obtain clarifications on the objectives and practical realisation of the visit.

The main document reviewed by the expert team was the self-evaluation report (SAR).

During the online sessions, the expert evaluators also held small group meetings in which they shared their views. They exchanged their analyses of the ASG-QA in relation to the review methodology, the self-assessment report and other documents received. The choice, the sequence and the formulation of the questions to be asked to the agency staff were discussed and decided during the preparation meetings, following a suggested list sent by the HAQAA coordination, which was adjusted by some experts to take into account the current context.

In order to avoid absences due to unavailability, the list of stakeholders to be met and interviewed was made jointly with the organisations to be visited.

2.4. Visits (on site and hybrid)

All visits (mostly in hybrid mode) lasted three days and went well; all requests from the expert committees were taken into account. The schedule of site visits was well respected by the different organisations. The panel was able to meet with all groups of stakeholder representatives already identified for interviews. All participants had the opportunity to contribute to the discussions in a free and frank manner.

In each interview, the experts recalled the objectives of the mission, the expected results in terms of advice and support, and finally the form of the external report written in accordance with the HAQAA project outline, in connection with the selected standards and guidelines of the ASG which were to be reviewed.

At the end of the visit, the experts had a feedback meeting with the members concerned (agency or ministry), where they summarised the main observations, analyses and recommendations following this visit.

Agencies/departments indicated that there were many positive aspects to the site visits, including the physical presence of the experts and their role in facilitating discussion with stakeholders and sharing experiences. In the future, they suggested they would like all experts to be present on site, and for the online mode to be used only for mission preparation.

2.5. Reports

The final review reports, which ranged in length from 23 to 48 pages, were written by the experts following the structure of the template provided, which was applied by all teams, with some modifications for some. Feedback indicated that this prototype was useful, not only to guide the writing, facilitate readability, but also to support the consistency and comparability of the reports between the different panels and to facilitate the synthesis. After the introductory summary note, the descriptive section (including contextual data on the higher education system in the country/region where the agency operates, provided in the introductory chapter) is very useful as it allows the reader to grasp the reality of the situation.

The chapter entitled “Findings, Analysis, and Judgments” has been aligned with the structure of the ASG-QA, at least in the relevant parts (Parts B and C).

In general, for each standard, there was a balance between the “findings,” “analysis,” and “recommendations” parts, with the exception of two reports. In addition, there was confusion between the term “judgment”⁶ (which can be qualitative or quantitative) in the model and the term “recommendation”⁷ found in the reports. This resulted in sometimes incomparable treatments of the standard by the different expert teams.

Only one report made “judgments” by inserting a hybrid compliance scale (qualitative and quantitative) for each requirement examined, using the logic of traffic lights; but the “analysis” part was rather poor and did not always justify the judgments made. In the other reports, there are recommendations for each standard examined and recommendations in the “recommendations and assessments” chapter, which makes some of them redundant.

Thus, the above remarks point to the need for additional training of evaluators to make them well aware of possible discrepancies in report writing and to strengthen their judgment and writing skills, which are essential for understanding and calibrating recommendations, and for ensuring their feasibility.

6. Judgment: reasoned opinion given by someone with official jurisdiction

7. Recommend: to advise someone about something; to indicate to someone that something is of interest

3. USE OF THE ASG-QA

3.1. Overview of the coverage of SAH-QA in the missions performed

As already mentioned above, the missions were of 2 types: Review, or support and advice for the bodies under the ministries (consultancy visits); for the agencies, the choice was left to their discretion. For review visits, the approach was to look closely at the agency's documents and practices and compare them with the ASG-QA. For consultancy visits, although the approach was the same, the number of standards to be examined was more limited. In fact, the purpose of the exercise was to provide support and guidance to agencies/countries to reflect on, appropriate, and use the standards in their future development.

The table below summarises the ASG-QA standards covered by the experts (in green). For AMAQ-SUP (Mali), all standards were covered during the agency's review since it was an agency visit.

Table 2. List of standards reviewed

References ASG-QA covered	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)	AMAQ-ES (Mauritania)	CIAQES (Algeria)	ANAQ-GN (Guinea)	EQB (Ivory Coast)	INAAREES (Angola)
Part B - standard 1	✓	X	X	X	X	X
standard 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
standard 3	✓	X	X	X	X	X
standard 4	✓	X	X	X	X	X
standard 5	✓	X	X	X	X	X
standard 6	✓	X	X	X	X	X
standard 7	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Part C - standard 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
standard 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
standard 3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
standard 4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
standard 5	✓	X	X	X	X	X
standard 6	✓	X	X	X	X	X
standard 7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
standard 8	✓	X	X	X	X	X
standard 9	✓	X	X	X	X	X

With regard to consultancy visits, the information note indicated the standards to be taken into account (some standards are not applicable to them for the time being, given the missions assigned to them) insofar as this was possible given the level of development of the body visited in the country concerned:

Part B

- Reference 2. *Development of external quality assurance mechanisms appropriate to the context*

Part C

- Reference 1. *Legal personality*
- Reference 2. *Vision and Mission Statement*
- Reference 3. *Governance and Management*
- Reference 4. *Independence of the agency*
- Reference 7. *Human and Financial Resources*

In addition, the countries participating in the consultancy visits were invited, together with the experts, to analyze any additional references from Parts B and C of the ASG-QA, if relevant and feasible.

3.2. Overview and analysis by reference

3.2.1. Part B

	Statement	Reference	Organization concerned
1	Objectives of external quality assurance and consideration for internal quality assurance	External quality assurance ensures that the HEI has a clearly articulated vision and mission statement. EQA helps the HEI to ensure the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance mechanisms, providing an additional instrument for assessing the quality of the institution.	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)

- Findings

The experts' report shows that external quality assurance, developed by AMAQ-SUP, encourages HEIs to prove that they have a defined vision and mission. To this end, Article 2 of Law No. 2018-034, which created AMAQ-SUP, states that AMAQ-SUP is responsible for, among other things, supporting HEIs in the development and implementation of their internal quality assurance and self-evaluation procedures. However, interviews with CIAQ officials, rectors and directors reveal that these trainings, support and information activities would benefit from being strengthened to allow for better dissemination and appropriation by all actors (students, teachers, managers, etc.) of HEIs.

- Comments

AMAQ-SUP has already begun to explain the link between IQA and EQA to stakeholders and provides relevant and appropriate tools for evaluating HEIs while ensuring that their development is supported. However, it is

important for AMAQ-SUP to consolidate these training and support activities in order to cover the needs of all Malian higher education stakeholders, of which there are many (seventeen public and one hundred and twenty-six private HEIs), in order to harmonise quality throughout the country.

- Judgement

Although much has been done in terms of training and coaching, the EQA procedures have not yet enabled HEIs to appreciate the link between IQA and EQA, to comply with established QA principles, benchmarks and guidelines, to develop and consolidate a quality culture by establishing mechanisms for continuous quality improvement, and to be recognised and accepted at national, regional, continental and international levels.

	Statement	Reference	Organizations involved
2	Development of external quality assurance mechanisms adapted to the context	External quality assurance benchmarks, guidelines, and processes are developed in a context-sensitive manner and defined to achieve the intended goals and objectives of EQA and to strengthen institutional-level IQA systems.	AMAQ-SUP AMAQ-ES CIAQES ANAQ-GN EQB INAAREES

- Findings

[AMAQ-SUP, MALI] The two institutional and training evaluation guidelines of AMAQ-SUP have taken into account both Malian specificities and international good practices (ASG-QA, CAMES, ANAQ-SUP, HCERES). They cover all the missions and dimensions of HEIs and the dimensions of training. The link between training and research is also well highlighted in the institutional reference framework, even if it could be more emphasized in the reference framework dedicated to training. Moreover, it emerged from interviews with the rectors, directors and heads of the CIAQs (quality units) of the HEIs evaluated during the pilot evaluations by AMAQ-SUP and representatives of the Ministry, that consultation and sharing processes have been carried out with a view to effectively taking charge of the realities and context of Mali, through the academic and scientific activities of the HEIs. However, the interview with the employer representative seems to show the need for a better involvement of this category of actors in the collaborative and consultative processes developed by AMAQ-SUP.

[AMAQ-ES, MAURITANIA] Despite its young existence, AMAQ-ES has very quickly put in place a number of tools, such as a programme framework (available on the website) and its self-evaluation guide. An institutional repository was being developed or even finalized at the time of the support visit. It was pointed out that AMAQ-ES has been benchmarking repositories from other quality assurance agencies, which is a good approach to learning. That said, although higher education stakeholders were involved in the construction of the above-mentioned documents, students, representatives of socio-professional sectors and local communities were not included in the design and validation of the reference systems.

[CIAQES, ALGERIA] Many preliminary actions to initiate and consolidate institutional quality assurance (internal quality assurance) have been piloted and implemented by CIAQES in accordance with its missions as set out in the decree of its creation. These include the appointment and training of Quality Assurance Managers (RAQs), the

setting up of Quality Assurance Units (CAQs), the development by the RAQs and members of CIAQES of the national quality assurance reference framework for health care institutions (RNAQES), the general self-assessment of all public health care institutions in 2016, and an experimental external evaluation of institutions that had carried out their self-assessment in the seven areas of the national reference framework. At this stage of QA implementation in Algeria, Part B and Part C, developed in accordance with the African references and guidelines, are not yet written. Only Part A (References and guidelines for internal quality assurance of institutions) has been published under the name “Référentiel National d’Assurance Qualité de l’Enseignement Supérieur” (RNAQES). The interviews conducted by the committee during the visit mention that the publication of these parts B and C is planned in the next version of the RNAQES. The students interviewed said they were interested in the process and convinced of its importance, but at the same time noted that they had hardly heard of it. Similarly, the training operations for the RAQs and the awareness-raising operations for the institutions did not involve private institutions.

[ANQ-GN, GUINEA] The experts noted that the goals and objectives of establishing the QA agency are strongly aligned with the objectives of the international sector players. These include strengthening IQA and building confidence in licensed institutions and accredited programmes. In this regard, ANAQ-GN has proceeded with the development of repositories (institutional, programmatic, etc.) and assessment tools between 2017 and 2021. During the site visit, the panel was able to ascertain that the context, goals and objectives of EQA and the strengthening of CIAQs (quality units) at the institutional level were taken into account. In terms of the context, it was found that the various stakeholders - including representatives of students, teachers, heads of quality units in private and public institutions, civil society and the professional world - had been taken into account in the development of the standards used by the agency.

[DGQE, COTE D’IVOIRE] External quality assurance standards, guidelines, and processes are developed by DGQE in a context-specific manner and defined to achieve the intended goals and objectives of external quality assurance and to strengthen internal quality assurance systems at the facility level. However, assessment procedures are not included in the standards. They are announced to facilities at the time of the launch of an assessment campaign, but not published with the standards. The stakeholders that were convened for the consultation meetings were mainly from the higher education context: institutional managers, student associations, parents of students, expert evaluators, representatives of the Ministry. Alumni and representatives of the socio-economic world are absent. Of note, the DGQE regularly organises training seminars for its own staff and those of the Ministry, as well as for the staff of the institutions’ internal quality assurance units.

[INAAREES, ANGOLA] The Angolan agency designed a general system for the cyclical evaluation and accreditation of the country’s higher education system - programmes and institutions - aligned with the ASG-QA, called the National Quality Assurance System (SNGQ). Its implementation began with the publication of new legislation; subsequently, INAAREES developed manuals and guidelines for self-evaluation of study programmes and institutions, to support the institutions themselves, and manuals and guidelines for external evaluation (aligned with ASG-QA). In addition, visits were made to HEIs across the country to disseminate the repositories and guidelines and to provide training in the preparation of future evaluations of higher education programmes for accreditation that will include site visits. However, a large contingent of internal and external stakeholders, especially students, professional bodies and labor market representatives, are not involved in the institution’s activities, particularly in the development of the standards.

- Comments

Although many actions have been carried out in the countries concerned by this operation, it has been noted that the involvement of stakeholders such as students, representatives of socio-professional sectors, and civil society is very low or even non-existent; however, their integration is necessary to guarantee the adhesion and involvement of all actors.

Similarly, in some countries, training and awareness-raising activities in institutions have not included private institutions, which can lead to a feeling of exclusion.

- Judgement

Alignment with the ASG-QA is not always clearly expressed in national documents, which can disrupt the comparability of qualifications, as well as academic mobility. In addition, an explicit and meaningful link between external and internal QA is essential to ensure buy-in and adequacy of QA mechanisms, which is not yet implemented in some countries. As contexts differ, this standard may be implemented in different ways in each country.

3	Statement	Reference	Organisation concerned
	Implementation of external quality assurance processes	EQA benchmarks, processes and procedures are predefined, reliable, published and consistently implemented for accountability purposes.	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)

- Findings

AMAQ-SUP has been developing relevant assessment tools (institutional and programme assessment benchmarks, as well as coaching guides for HEIs) since 2018. Most of these tools are now transparently accessible to all on the agency’s website. They were also used during the pilot evaluations conducted by the agency and by the HEIs for the self-evaluation and by the experts for the external evaluation. In addition to the tools mentioned above, AMAQ-SUP has drafted its own operational procedures; the agency also has an evaluation charter, templates for writing evaluation reports, grids for analysing reports, models for expert contracts and declarations of absence of conflict of interest.

- Comments

AMAQ-SUP has a set of solid tools for the implementation of its external quality assurance procedures and ensures that they are accessible through its website. However, as the Scientific Council had not yet been set up at the time of the expert panels’ visit because the dedicated regulatory act had not been signed. The final validation of the external evaluation report was postponed until the Scientific Council was set up.

- Judgement

Alignment with the ASG-QA standard is formally expressed in the documents produced, but implementation takes time, which has not allowed the agency to validate the evaluation actions carried out. The standard is applied, but accountability must become cultural, given that public service employees in some countries are not in the habit of doing so.

	Statement	Reference	Organisation concerned
4	Independence of the evaluation	The EQA is conducted by committees of external experts from a wide range of fields of expertise.	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)

- Findings

For the pilot evaluations conducted to date, AMAQ-SUP has relied primarily on a pool of experts mobilized by the Ministry. A recruitment procedure for experts, both national and international in scope, was underway at the time of the visit. Candidates had to meet the requirements set by the agency and published on the agency’s website.

- Comments

AMAQ-SUP ensures the independence of the evaluation through a growing pool of experts and procedures to avoid conflicts of interest. During evaluations conducted by the agency, experts must sign a declaration of honor, indicating that the various conditions required and contractual conditions will be respected. The agency also ensures that experts are trained at the time of the launch of the evaluations, which is essential to ensure the quality of the evaluations conducted. On the other hand, the absence of experts from the professional world and of students in the teams of some pilot evaluations limits the multiplicity of views of the different stakeholders, which should be taken into account in EQA procedures.

- Judgement

With a transparent and rigorous process for selecting external experts in place, there is confidence that future evaluations will be independent, which has not been the case to date because experts were selected by the Ministry, which could have led to doubt about their independence. In some countries, the hiring of international reviewers may be hampered by the unavailability of funds, which could make this requirement difficult to meet.

	Statement	Reference	Organisation concerned
5	Evaluation decisions and reports (EQA results)	External quality assurance reports and decisions are clear and based on published and transparently accessible references, processes and procedures.	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)

- Findings

The references, processes and procedures, related to external quality assurance, have been defined in the two accompanying guides provided for this purpose. These documents are available on the AMAQ-SUP website and are accessible to all. In these two guides, it is indicated that the experts, after the on-site visit, will produce a provisional report, which is sent to the HEI being evaluated through AMAQ-SUP. This gives the evaluated institution the opportunity to submit remarks on factual errors and to prepare a reasoned letter with observations. Once finalized and validated by the Scientific Council, the final report, together with the observation letter signed by the head of the evaluated HEI, is then sent to the Ministry in charge of higher education. The decision of accreditation or habilitation is the sole prerogative of the Ministry mentioned above.

- Comments

The AMAQ-SUP decisions resulting from external quality assurance are clear and described in various documents. However, the implementation of these decisions is not always effective. For example, given that the decision to accredit and authorize falls within the competence of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, there is a question as to whether the opinion of the experts and the Scientific Council is taking into account. On the other hand, and although they exist, many documents were not yet in use since at the time of the experts' visit, and the Scientific Council was not yet functional. Another point was mentioned during the interviews by the case managers who coordinate external quality assurance activities. They consider that in practice, the rereading and revision of reports is complex when the experts issue divergent opinions. This should be addressed in advance when the experts are preparing the closing meeting. Finally, the reports produced during the pilot evaluations would benefit from being harmonised in order to ensure their readability.

- Judgement

Although external quality assurance reports are clear and based on published references, processes, and procedures, final accreditation and licensing decisions are made solely by the Ministry, which does not ensure that the opinions of the experts are always taken into account. This approach may even call into question the independence of the agency. On the other hand, there may be different approaches to review reports in different agencies (as has been noted in the other HAQAA reports), which would require training for experts and better report templates.

	Statement	Reference	Organization concerned
6	Periodic evaluation of institutions and programs	External quality assurance of institutions and programs is conducted on a cyclical basis.	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)

- Findings

The AMAQ-SUP has not yet taken a formal decision on the periodicity of the institutional evaluation cycles, training programs and research. It appears from the interviews with the experts that it is envisaged that the periodicity will be set according to the duration of the accreditation of training programs, which is currently four years for bachelor's and master's degrees, and five years for the accreditation of HEIs.

- Comments

External quality assurance is not yet carried out on a cyclical basis, due to a lack of financial resources to ensure the regularity of evaluations, as explained in Part C. The representatives of the AMAQ-SUP management team that participated in the visit indicated that they are currently considering the frequency of evaluations.

- Judgement

This standard is not yet implemented (no alignment with ASG-QA) due to lack of resources, which raises, in addition, questions about the future autonomy of the agency.

	Statement	Reference	Organisation concerned
7	Complaints and appeals	The complaints and appeals process is clearly defined and communicated to the institution concerned.	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)

- Findings

AMAQ-SUP has developed an appeal procedures manual that details the steps and activities in the process. However, in the case of an appeal, the existence of an act, signed on the competent authority, is not made public. The appeal may concern the decision by which the Executive Director of AMAQ-SUP declares an HEI's application for evaluation inadmissible or a disagreement with the self-evaluation report or the opinions of the Scientific Council.

- Comments

The appeal procedures are clearly defined, but they have not yet been applied in practice, since AMAQ-SUP

has not yet received an appeal; this could be explained by the fact that it has so far carried out only three pilot evaluations. As for the appeal procedures following an accreditation/habilitation decision by the Ministry, it is not mentioned in the manual of appeal procedures and is not part of the agency's prerogatives.

- Judgement

A recourse system is established and formalised, but it has not yet been used. There is compliance with the ASG-AQ standard. However, this standard must be backed up by the standard for agency independence to ensure fairness in the handling of appeals.

3.2.2. Part C

	Statement	Reference	Organisations involved
1	Legal personality	The AAQ is an autonomous legal entity with a clearly defined mandate, scope of action and powers. It is recognized as the quality assurance agency at a national/regional level.	AMAQ-SUP AMAQ-ES CIAQES ANAQ-GN EQB INAAREES

- Findings

[AMAQ-SUP, MALI] AMAQ-SUP was created by Law No. 2018-034 of June 27, 2018, which gives it the status of a Public Scientific and Technological Institution (EPST). It has its own legal personality and is autonomous; its mission is to “contribute to ensuring the quality of the higher education and scientific research system, its institutions and its training courses”. Decree No. 2018-0734/P-RM of September 21, 2018 sets out its organization and operating procedures. Since the support and advisory visit conducted during HAQAA 1, AMAQ-SUP is now the sole authority in charge of evaluating training, institutions and soon research in Mali. However, it is not in charge of accreditation, which remains the prerogative of the Ministry, which relies on the evaluation reports produced by the agency.

[AMAQ-ES, MAURITANIA] AMAQ-ES was established by Decree No. 2021-031 of March 4, 2021. Its main mission is to “contribute to ensuring the quality of the higher education and research system and to promote the culture of evaluation and quality assurance. It has “legal personality and financial autonomy and is placed under the technical supervision of the ministry in charge of higher education”. It is responsible for higher education (institutions and training programs) and research. Its field of action covers both public and private higher education institutions.

[CIAQES, ALGERIA] CIAQES, created in 2010, is a commission for the implementation of quality assurance in Algerian higher education; it does not have the authority to evaluate (although it has initiated and piloted internal evaluations at the national level) and accredit. That said, the documents brought to the attention of the experts mention the future creation of “a National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education and Scientific Research (ANAQA-ESRS)” placed under the supervision of the Minister in charge of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The agency would be an independent public establishment with a specific character, endowed with legal personality and financial autonomy.

[ANAQ-GN, GUINEA] The National Authority for Quality Assurance in Education, Training and Research ANAQ- GN was created in January 2017. According to Article 1 of the said decree, it is a Public Administrative Establishment (EPA) with financial, organizational, regulatory autonomy and independent in its judgments and decisions. As a public institution, ANAQ-GN has legal personality. It is placed under a double supervision: the administrative and technical supervision of the Minister in charge of higher education and scientific research and the financial supervision of the Minister in charge of finance and state holdings. The scope of action and missions of ANAQ-GN are clearly identified and well defined in its creation decree. The clear exposition of the prerogatives and missions of each body (Board of Directors, Executive Committee and Executive Committee) contributes to the proper functioning of ANAQ-GN. During the visit, the expert committee noted that each body carries out its missions and makes its decisions in complete independence. The synergy and complementarity in the functioning of these three bodies should be emphasized, which contributes to the development of ANAQ-GN. It should be noted that ANAQ-GN is the only body for the evaluation of higher education, technical and vocational education institutions and programs as well as research and documentation centers in Guinea. The autonomy of ANAQ-GN is present in its publications without external injunction. The committee of experts noted that ANAQ-GN, despite its youth, already enjoys recognition, respect and confidence in its evaluation activities on the part of all stakeholders.

[DGQE, COTE D'IVOIRE] Currently, the DGQE is a general directorate of the MESRS and therefore does not have legal autonomy or independence. The DGQE is responsible for quality assurance in higher education and research in Côte d'Ivoire. Its creation decree does not allow for an understanding of its current scope of intervention in relation to «accreditation bodies» and «standardization agencies». The draft decree for the creation of ANAQESR in the version presented at the time of the support mission provides for the creation of an entity with legal personality and financial autonomy. Article 2 provides for an agency «under the technical supervision of the Minister in charge of Higher Education and Scientific Research and under the joint supervision of the Ministers in charge of the Economy, Finance, the Budget and the State Portfolio.

[INAAREES, ANGOLA] The Angolan authority was created in 2013 after the reorganization of an already existing body; its mission, enshrined in the founding texts, is to “promote the quality of education through evaluation, which ensures the continuous improvement of the quality of the components of the educational subsystem, as well as to homologate the certification of higher education studies carried out in the country, to recognize and issue the equivalence of diplomas and academic titles obtained abroad. Currently, following the organic and technical restructuring it has undergone, INAAREES is a public institution with legal personality, administrative, financial and patrimonial autonomy, and with well-defined bodies and services. Although the legislation explicitly establishes the independence of INAAREES, certain constraints weigh on its real independence. For example, for public information, site construction, choice of experts and other activities, it should be more autonomous, which is not the case today.

- Comments

The Malian and Mauritanian agencies have their own legal personality and are autonomous. Their scope of activity is well defined and focuses on evaluation; accreditation remains the responsibility of the Ministry for the time being. The other agencies, both current and future, have their own legal personality and financial

autonomy, but are or will be under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education, which can lead to confusion as to their missions and the need for independence in order to meet continental (ASG-AQ) and international requirements. It would be appropriate for future decrees establishing the agencies (currently being drafted) to specify the impact of the «tutelage of the Ministry of Higher Education» on their autonomy. That said, the agencies should take the initiative and develop their activities more independently, since the legislation itself allows them to do so.

- Judgement

Although the current or future agencies are autonomous on “paper” (cf. the decrees of creation), it is not yet proven that they are really autonomous in the sense of the ASG-QA. That said, in terms of the decree and the creation texts, this standard is easy to verify and validate.

	Statement	Reference	Organizations involved
2	Vision and Mission Statement	AAQ develops and publishes a vision and mission statement or goals that take into consideration the context of higher education.	AMAQ-SUP AMAQ-ES CIAQES ANAQ-GN EQB INAAREES

- Findings

[AMAQ-SUP, MALI] AMAQ-SUP has a mission with objectives, which are clearly defined in the law of its creation. Its mission is essentially focused on quality assurance in the higher education and scientific research system in Mali, and is to “contribute to ensuring the quality of the higher education and scientific research system, its institutions and its training programs. The various bodies, the Board of Directors, the Scientific Council (in the process of being operationalized) and the Executive Management, are responsible for ensuring that the mission is carried out in order to achieve the assigned objectives, in accordance with the legal framework and provisions.

[AMAQ-ES, MAURITANIA] The agency’s missions are defined in its founding decree and are “to design and implement a quality assurance system compatible with the objectives and requirements of our higher education and research system,” and to “contribute to ensuring the quality of the higher education and research system and to promote the culture of evaluation and quality assurance. However, the expert team did not find any document in which the Authority sets out its main missions and vision for the general public. The interviews also showed that the missions, vision, and objectives of the AMAQ-ES are not clearly understood and differentiated by all stakeholders. In addition, AMAQ-ES highlighted six values in the self-assessment report (ethics and deontology, equal opportunities and fairness, transparency, professionalism, vision of a shared quality culture, continuous development of the quality assurance system) as well as a draft strategic plan and its translation into an action plan for 2022.

[CIAQES, ALGERIA] According to oral information received, it appears that the missions and objectives of the

agency being created will take into consideration the context of Algerian higher education. Thus, the future Algerian agency for quality assurance and accreditation will have the mission “to organize and supervise external evaluation of all institutions and to monitor the implementation of the experts’ recommendations, through actions for the continuous improvement of the quality of training and university activities. More specifically, the agency’s mission will consist of the accreditation of institutions and courses. According to the CIAQES and MESRS interlocutors, other expert missions could be entrusted to the future agency and would contribute to covering part of its operating costs. Among these tasks is the processing of applications for recognition of equivalence of foreign diplomas. This being said, and as the agency is in gestation, the vision and objectives are not yet written and therefore not published (and the mission as well).

[ANAQ-GN, GUINEA] The information and documents provided to the experts, outlining the vision, mission and objectives, showed that quality assurance is the agency’s main activity. Everything is included in the strategic plan, whose vision is “to raise the level of quality of institutions and their programs through evaluation for their better recognition and increased employability of graduates. This strategic plan, which took into account the context of Guinean higher education, is at the same time a document of communication, promotion and orientation making clear the vision of the institution. It has also enabled the institution to mobilize its staff towards the same goal.

[DGQE, COTE D’IVOIRE] The DGQE is not an autonomous legal entity with a clearly defined mandate, scope of action and powers. It has a well-defined mission in its founding decree but no stated vision or strategic plan. It is, however, recognized as a quality assurance body at a national/regional level. That said, plans to create an autonomous and independent quality assurance agency are well underway and should address these shortcomings.

[INAAREES, ANGOLA] INAAREES has a mission and a vision defined in its statutes. Its mission is “to promote the quality of education through evaluation, which ensures the continuous improvement of the quality of the components of the educational subsystem, as well as to accredit the certification of higher education studies carried out in the country, to recognize and issue equivalences of diplomas and academic titles obtained abroad”. Its vision is “to conduct credible, objective, timely, relevant and impartial assessments that meet and/or exceed higher education quality standards, correspond to international standards, respect the right to quality education for all, pursue equity, and respect diversity, utility, feasibility, legitimacy, accuracy and fairness.” The agency has a strategic plan that takes into account the national context of HE and a well-defined sector management plan, linked to the agency’s resources and focused on evaluation activities. During the meetings, it was noted that the planning documents are being revised in line with the vision of the new cabinet.

- Comments

AMAQ-SUP has not yet defined its vision, and although an agency development plan has been developed, there is no practical management plan detailing how to mobilize agency resources to achieve its goals. There is currently no practical management plan detailing how to mobilize the agency’s resources to achieve its goals.

In the current state of the texts and the results of the interviews, the vision and mission of the AMAQ-ES do not appear in a precise way in a document that could be shared with the Authority’s stakeholders and made public, a fortiori through a publication on its website. In the same sense, the mission and the functions or objectives are not clearly dissociated.

For the future Algerian agency, it is not clear that the vision and missions of the agency are published in different documents that could be shared with stakeholders. The expert missions that are envisaged must be considered carefully. While the assignment of this responsibility is the responsibility of the country's authorities, the committee is careful to ensure that these expert assessments (by other existing bodies) do not give rise to suspicions of conflicts of interest if they are carried out for the benefit of entities (training, establishment, research entity) that are otherwise evaluated by the Agency.

The tasks assigned to the agencies often require resources that are not always available. In order to carry out the missions and achieve the objectives, it is necessary to substantially increase the technical staff and the financial means.

- Judgement

The document describing the vision and goals of current or future agencies is still often lacking and does not allow these organizations to have a clearly formalized roadmap and strategy, which does not meet a fundamental requirement of ASG-QA. This standard gives agencies the opportunity to contextualize and refine their vision and mission statements in order to enhance their visibility, communicate broadly about their missions and legal goals, and put a plan of action as a consequence of a strategy. It is necessary and useful for agencies to map out their roadmap.

	Statement	Reference	Organizations involved
3	Governance and management	QAA has clearly defined structures to ensure rigorous and ethical governance and management, including good quality assurance practices in support of its mission and official mandate.	AMAQ-SUP AMAQ-ES CIAQES ANAQ-GN EQB INAAREES

- Findings

[AMAQ-SUP, MALI] In accordance with the law of creation, AMAQ-SUP is administered and managed by three governing bodies (the Board of Directors, the Executive Board and the Scientific Council), for which the missions are clearly defined in the above-mentioned law. Thus, AMAQ-SUP has well-defined structures, or those in the process of being finalized, to ensure rigorous and ethical governance and management. All procedures related to financial and management decision-making are set out in a procedures manual that formalizes the main administrative, financial, accounting, operational and internal audit procedures. Staff are recruited on the basis of job descriptions drawn up in advance. That said, the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee are not included in the organization chart. In terms of ethics, the signing of a charter of ethics and deontology, currently being finalized, will set out the practices of internal staff, experts and members of the Board of Directors and the Scientific Council.

[AMAQ-ES, MAURITANIA] Through its 2021 decree of creation, the Authority has a governance structure whose organs are the Board of Directors, the Scientific Council and the Executive Body. Technical and

administrative services are provided to assist the Executive Director in his mission to manage WADA-ES. The main officials of AMAQ-ES are appointed by the Minister in charge of Higher Education. The Scientific Council develops the reference documents necessary for the execution of the Authority's mission. In general, the scientific council is the body that, among other things, validates the documents developed by the experts and deliberates on the proposals of external experts. In the texts establishing the AMAQ-ES, it is not specified who will make the final decision on accreditation or habilitation, although only the Ministry has the power to accredit. There is still no communication plan to disseminate information to the public.

[CIAQES, ALGERIA] As CIAQES is only a QA implementation committee, it is not structured with a relevant governance body and supporting administration. The chairperson and members have been appointed by the Ministry. The prerogatives of this commission are essentially focused on support, awareness, training and advice. The information system is weak in the CIAQES approach, which causes insufficient visibility of its achievements to create buy-in from all stakeholders. That said, the operation of CIAQES has provided interesting experiences of governance and management of a quality assurance system at the national level and within higher education institutions, even though some people have played several roles at once as managers of the central structure, expert assessors, quality assurance trainers, etc.

[ANAQ-GN, GUINEA] The Guinean agency is supported by three governance bodies: the Board of Directors (BoD), the Scientific Council (SC) and the Executive Secretariat (ES). Based on this organization, its operating rules, and following the various meetings with stakeholders during the visit, the expert committee notes that ANAQ has these three bodies, well coordinated, with clearly defined prerogatives, responsibilities and mandates, thus enabling ANAQ to achieve its vision and fulfill its missions and achieve its medium-term strategic objectives effectively and efficiently. Nevertheless, and although a cell exists in the organization chart, there is no communication strategy to inform the public.

[Today, the EQMD is a department within the Ministry, and although it has a well-defined structure, it lacks rigorous and independent governance and management. The EQMD does not have adequate and appropriate human, financial, and physical resources to effectively and efficiently carry out its quality assurance mandate. Despite the obstacles, the DGQE has put in place good quality assurance practices to serve Ivorian higher education and scientific research. The repositories are published on a specific DGQE website, the link to which is not announced on the ministry's website and which cannot be found by search engines. Communication exists only with the HEIs, without being formal; there is no functional communication department. There is very little consultation with stakeholders, who are not sufficiently involved and who complain about the lack of feedback after evaluations.

[INAAREES, ANGOLA] The structure of INAAREES, as a public institution, is characterized by a well-defined organization, with appropriate departments and committees that deal with issues related to the agency's core business as well as issues related to human resource management, gender equity and integration, financial management, and probity, all within the framework of the country's legislation. A National Council for Quality Assurance (NCQA), which will act as a board of directors, is provided for in the law but is not yet functioning. INAAREES management has indicated that it will be established soon. The agency does not yet have a communication and information dissemination system for public accountability. It is the Ministry that manages INAAREES' public information. Although the representatives of external stakeholders have

expressed great openness and willingness to collaborate with INAAREES, there is not yet a body for regular consultation. With regard to financial resources, INAAREES will receive additional funding from the State for the evaluation and accreditation of study programs and higher education institutions.

- **Comments**

AMAQ-SUP does not have a defined communication strategy to disseminate information to the public in a regular and planned manner, nor does it have an internal complaints and appeals procedure for inappropriate or abusive behavior by staff. For the ethics charter, which is currently being drafted, it is important that only AMAQ-SUP be listed on this document to emphasize its independence from the Department. Indeed, when agency members are also part of the Ministry, this leaves very few possibilities for them and for the agency.

There is no evidence of periodic stakeholder consultations and follow-up actions on key aspects of policy and operations.

For the AMAQ-ES, the publication of evaluation and accreditation decisions and reports is not provided for in the current texts. The charter of ethics and professional conduct has not yet been developed for the experts involved in the external evaluation missions set up by AMAQ-ES, for the members of its various bodies and for its staff.

For agencies in the process of being established (Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire), it is useful, as of now, to provide structures to ensure transparent, independent, and autonomous governance, as well as rigorous and ethical management, including formalizing good quality assurance practices in support of its mission and official mandate.

ANAQ-GN must adopt a real communication strategy and activate more its communication structure provided for in its organizational chart. ANAQ must also maintain periodic consultations with stakeholders on the main aspects of its policy and its various activities.

- **Judgement**

Existing and emerging agencies have defined structures to ensure rigorous and ethical governance and management, including good quality assurance practices in support of their mission. That said, there is diversity in practice, and many do not have a clear system for communicating their activities to civil society. This may be due to contextualized national cultures that do not yet allow this.

	Statement	Reference	Organizations involved
4	Independence of the AAQ	The AAQ is independent in its activities, results, judgments and decisions.	AMAQ-SUP AMAQ-ES CIAQES ANAQ-GN EQB INAAREES

- Findings

[AMAQ-SUP, MALI] AMAQ-SUP is placed under the supervision of the ministry in charge of higher education and scientific research. To this end, Article 18 of the law creating the agency states that the supervisory authority is exercised over the authorities of AMAQ-SUP by way of substitution, suspension or revocation, as well as over their acts by way of prior authorization, approval, cancellation, substitution or suspension of execution. Thus formulated, these legal provisions do not seem to be in line with the absolute perspective of organizational, operational and official independence of the AMAQ-SUP. Moreover, the same law creating the agency insists on cooperation between AMAQ-SUP and SESB, which threatens the agency's independence. The position of AMAQ-SUP is thus ambiguous: the two institutions (AMAQ and DGERS), which share the origin of evaluation policies, resources, and practices (AMAQ-SUP was created by the Ministry), tend to adhere to a form of preservation of the original unity.

[AMAQ-ES, MAURITANIA] The decree establishing AMAQ-ES stipulates that the Authority is placed under the technical supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education. Thus, the texts are not explicit with regard to the independence of the Authority. The modalities for exercising technical supervision do not guarantee the autonomy and independence of the agency. Likewise, the supervision can lead to the revocation of the acts and decisions of the Authority. There is also the intervention of employees of the Ministry of Higher Education, who are members of the Board of Directors and the Scientific Council, in the decision-making of the Authority.

[CIAQES, ALGERIA] Although CIAQES is totally independent, it has no prerogatives to exercise authority in terms of evaluation and decisions on accreditation; it is only a QA implementation commission. In the project for the agency to be set up, the preparatory texts provide for its independence in its financing and in the conduct of its statutory activities, as well as transparency, impartiality and openness to the international scene, with the aim of achieving international recognition as soon as possible. To this end, the agency is to be an "independent administrative authority, with legal personality and financial autonomy". However, independence has not yet been fully defined (in the creation project) at the decision-making, organizational and operational levels, in accordance with the ASG-QA, in order to ensure that the mechanism promotes freedom of action that takes into account the modes of governance and management of higher education and research that, among other things, seek to strengthen the autonomy of universities.

[ANAQ-GN, GUINEA] The organizational independence of ANAQ is noted at different levels: from its legal status, at the level of the board of directors and the scientific council, which carry out their legally assigned missions in complete independence, and at the level of the executive secretary, who is vested with the decision-making power necessary for the agency's operation. Although ANAQ is largely financed by the State (apart from some of its own resources), this does not affect its operational independence, which is reflected in the establishment of procedures, program and institution evaluation guidelines, a code of ethics and a set of internal regulations. ANAQ is sovereign in setting the timetable for evaluation and/or accreditation missions, which is approved by its Scientific Council. Its operational independence is also reflected in the recruitment of its expert assessors, through a call for applications. ANAQ carries out its evaluations in complete independence and the results of these evaluations, which take the form of reports from the expert teams, are submitted to the Scientific Council for approval. The results of the deliberations are notified to the institutions concerned

and then published as required by the decree establishing ANAQ. That said, as the composition of the Board of Directors is mainly drawn from ministerial departments (seven members out of eleven), one may wonder about the effective and operational autonomy in the decision-making process within the Board.

[DGQE, COTE D’IVOIRE] The DGQE is under the authority of the Minister of Higher Education and reports to him and in some cases awaits his opinion before making decisions. The DGIE sets the main orientations and decides on its action program; proposes evaluation criteria to the administration; drafts its reference systems; and establishes its reports aimed at improving quality in complete independence. In fact, it has no organizational independence, nor for decisions concerning official results; as for its independence, it is partial. This is quite normal, because the DGQE is not a QA agency. Thus, the draft decree for the creation of ANAQESR provides for the constitution of an entity with legal personality and financial autonomy.

[INAAREES, ANGOLA] INAAREES has a relative autonomy dictated by the law. Two aspects define its status: on the one hand, it is a public institute with clearly defined administrative, financial and operational autonomy, and on the other, it is an administrative department of the Ministry. The panel was able to observe that there is operational independence with respect to the design and operationalization of the national quality assurance system and the tools created to carry out the evaluation and accreditation of study programs and institutions. However, it is not yet possible to verify the independence of the formal results, i.e., the final decision of the quality assurance activities, since INAAREES has not yet started the evaluations. Regarding financial and budgetary issues, there are also some limitations; indeed, the budget is allocated by the Ministry, which apparently limits its independence, although the director stated that they do not have financial problems because the Minister has guaranteed an additional allocation and is committed to supporting the accreditation activities.

- Comments

Although the decrees establishing the agencies always “speak” of autonomy and independence (institutional, organizational, operational, and/or official results?), and apart from the Guinean authority, all the other agencies do not enjoy the “total” independence necessary for a quality assurance agency.

- Judgement

Although agencies (existing or future) operate at different speeds in different contexts, the “real” independence of these bodies remains one of their greatest challenges, as they often do not have it. Alignment with this GSA-QA requirement is vital to the recognition, performance and sustainability of agencies, even if it will take time to establish in some countries, for cultural and/or centralized national policy reasons.

	Statement	Reference	Organization concerned
5	Policies, processes and activities	The QAA undertakes its external quality assurance activities in accordance with the references and guidelines set forth in Part B of the QAA.	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)

- Findings

The AMAQ-SUP criteria, benchmarks and procedures are tailored to the HEIs' organization and activities and cover both financial and human resources as well as resources for learning and research. They have been discussed with HEIs and other stakeholders in various workshops. Research has not yet been specifically assessed, as the framework is still under development.

- Comments

AMAQ-SUP has clear assessment procedures that it implements effectively through relevant benchmarks, adapted to the core activities of HEIs. Nevertheless, learning outcomes are not sufficiently emphasized in the institutional framework. The monitoring and evaluation of learning outcomes would allow to see if the set objectives are achieved at the end of the training program. The development of objectives and learning outcomes should be prepared in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

- Judgement

Although the assessments to date have been conducted by experts appointed by the Ministry, the Malian agency has developed frameworks and procedures for undertaking its external quality assurance activities in accordance with the references and guidelines set out in Part B of the GSA-QA. In time, there will be feedback to improve the procedures and other documents, and to further emphasize the learning outcomes.

	Statement	Reference	Organization concerned
6	Internal quality assurance	QAA has policies and processes in place for its own internal quality assurance regarding the definition, assurance and improvement of the quality and integrity of its activities.	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)

- Findings

Various implementation documents (administrative, accounting and financial procedure manuals, ethics and professional conduct charter, evaluation charter) ensure objectivity and fairness in the agency's judgments. AMAQ-SUP's management is also well aware that a person should be in charge of the agency's IQA, and it is their goal to recruit the appropriate person. However, AMAQ-SUP does not yet have a specific policy document on its vision for quality assurance and its strategic planning objectives. An agency development plan has been developed, but it does not provide a timeline for action.

- Comments

The agency does not yet have its own internal quality assurance procedures aimed at improving the quality of its services and is aware of this; it is ready to begin the process of hiring an internal auditor. Also, because AMAQ-SUP was established in 2018, it is too early for it to already be implementing thematic analyses of the

higher education landscape, but interviews with experts indicated that the agency plans to collaborate with the ministry’s information and data division in the future to produce such analyses.

- Judgement

This requirement should be implemented as soon as possible by the Malian agency in order to align with ASG-QA.

	Statement	Reference	Organisation concerned
7	Human and financial resources	The QAA has adequate and appropriate human, financial, and material resources to carry out its QA mandate effectively and efficiently.	AMQA-SUP AMQA-ES CIAQES ANAQ-GN EQB INAAREES

- Findings

[AMQA-SUP, MALI] AMQA-SUP is aware that it does not yet have the human and financial resources to fully carry out its missions. The agency has already implemented a series of training sessions to ensure that staff skills are adapted to their missions and is in the process of developing a new staff training plan. It is important to note that the bulk of AMQA-SUP’s human, financial and material resources come from government spending. Financial resources are considered insufficient by AMQA-SUP authorities. For example, there is no budget line dedicated to the financing of evaluation missions, which are part of the agency’s core business. Moreover, there is no mention of a gender parity policy or of a policy in favor of disadvantaged minorities.

[AMQA-ES, MAURITANIA] Being still young, AMQA-ES currently has only the Director, his deputy, administrative and support staff. The agency has not yet begun the process of recruiting the technical quality assurance staff needed to support the Authority’s work on methodology, assessments, etc. For the time being, AMQA-ES relies on experts for assessments and other technical activities. AMQA-ES has sufficient and spacious premises with the necessary equipment for its proper functioning. It also has sufficient financial resources that come exclusively from the government. On the other hand, the team of experts was unable to find a training plan for the Authority’s staff members, particularly with a view to developing their expertise in quality assurance. It was also noted that there is little representation of women in the Authority’s authorities, bodies and staff.

[CIAQES, ALGERIA] CIAQES has no resources; it is composed of academics appointed by the Ministry and who are volunteers. Concerning the future QA agency, important efforts have already been made in the reflections conducted by CIAQES and in the proposals presented. Profiles of the members of the administrative and scientific boards and of the Director General have been defined. However, their selection methods and criteria are not clearly addressed (call for applications, co-optation, etc.). Unlike the members of the Board and the Scientific Council, the Director General does not have a mandate, a situation that could limit his/her freedom. As for financial resources, the need to obtain funding commensurate with the agency’s objectives was emphasised in the CIAQES self-evaluation report and during interviews. The various sources of funding

recommended are: the state subsidy, the costs of evaluation files, the sale of expertise and the costs of processing files for the recognition of foreign diplomas. As far as material resources are concerned, it is hoped that the agency will be provided with the infrastructure, equipment and materials necessary for its proper functioning. There is no mention of a policy for parity between men and women, nor one that favours people from disadvantaged social backgrounds.

[ANAG-GN, GUINEA] The experts found that ANAQ-GN is adequately funded to achieve its vision, mission, and objectives. It has adequate resources for its quality assurance activities. With regard to human resources, staff is recruited on the basis of a call for applications. This staff is composed of dynamic and motivated men and women (without parity). The staff is recruited from the private and public sectors, mostly from the academic world. As far as financial resources are concerned, the State allocates a quarterly grant to ANAQ-GN. The latter allows them to pay salaries, purchase supplies and goods, various consumables, maintenance and repair, capacity building. In addition to this grant, internal revenues are generated mainly from evaluation fees paid by institutions and programmes. Donations and bequests are also part of ANAQ-GN's resources. It also diversifies its sources of funding through other institutions such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). As for material resources, ANAQ-GN is equipped with computer tools, office furniture as well as a fleet of cars allowing it to carry out its evaluations.

[DGMEQ, COTE D'IVOIRE] DGMEQ does not have adequate resources that take into account real needs. The allocated budget is often lower than the budget requested, and may even be insufficient. The civil service assigns staff to the DGQE without taking into account the expressed needs. That said, the future agency must have adequate and appropriate human, financial and material resources to carry out its QA mandate effectively and efficiently. It is also important to integrate a gender parity policy.

[INAAREES, ANGOLA] INAAREES has adequate facilities and qualified and experienced staff. However, it has been noted that this staff is insufficient (due to the numerous missions assigned to the institution), hence the need to recruit as soon as possible. Since financial resources are not sufficient, INAAREES will receive additional funding from the State for the start of evaluation and for the accreditation of study programmes and HEIs. In addition, there is a working group that is evaluating the fees to be charged for conducting external evaluation exercises of HEIs as well as the remuneration of external evaluators to maintain financial balance.

- Comments

The organisations do not always have the necessary resources to operate effectively; moreover, they depend, for the most part, on public funding, which limits their autonomy, independence and scope of action.

There is no mention of inclusion of people with fewer opportunities for economic, social, cultural, geographic, health or other reasons such as disability. Respect for gender parity is not described and not supported.

- Judgement

Even if this is not always the case (for young or emerging agencies in particular), agencies are publically funded, but not always sufficiently so as to carry out their missions. If they do not have adequate and appropriate resources to carry out their QA mandate, their operations will be less effective. The fact that there is nothing

on inclusion of people fewer opportunities and gender balance in the agency staffing and approach towards experts shows that there is still work to be done in this area.

	Statement	Reference	Organisation concerned
8	Benchmarking, networking and collaboration	The AAQ promotes and participates in international initiatives, conferences and workshops and collaborates with relevant QA bodies to exchange and share experiences and best practices.	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)

- Findings

The agency had already established partnerships with CAMES, ANAQ-SUP and HCERES during the first HAQAA 1 assessment, and has since expanded its strategy internationally. Indeed, AMAQ-SUP has seized various opportunities to receive training, such as in the QA project piloted by UNESCO and the city of Shenzhen, China between 2017 and 2020. It is also a founding member of the RAFANAQ network (Réseau Africain Francophone des Agences Nationale d'Assurance Qualité), which allows it to share best practices with similar agencies. AMAQ-SUP also collaborates regularly with Moroccan and Senegalese agencies with which it has signed partnership agreements.

- Comments

AMAQ-SUP has continued to develop its regional and international collaborations by targeting relevant partners, adapted to its needs, in order to benefit from an adequate sharing of experiences and good practices. The agency participates in efforts to develop quality assurance at the regional and continental levels. It is also a driving force in the recognition of international programmes and qualifications and has brought the Addis Ababa Convention to the Ministry to ensure its ratification.

- Judgement

Although still young, AMAQ-SUP participates in international initiatives, conferences, and workshops, and collaborates with relevant QA bodies, whether regional, continental, or international. This is a learning process and will help ensure the sustainability of the agency.

	Statement	Reference	Organisation concerned
9	Periodic evaluation of the QAA	QAA undergoes periodic internal and external evaluations for the purpose of continuous improvement.	AMAQ-SUP (Mali)

- Findings

AMAQ-SUP has received, as part of the HAQAA initiative, a consultancy visit in 2018 (HAQAA1) and an external evaluation in 2022 (HAQAA2). However, the agency has not yet formally defined the periodicity of internal and external evaluations with a view to continuous improvement. With regard to external evaluations, in 2020 Mali requested and obtained the support of two quality assurance experts within the framework of the UEMOA/CAMES Higher Education Quality Assurance Support Project, who were charged with evaluating the national QA system with a view to highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of QA in the Malian environment and proposing avenues for improvement. The frequency of internal evaluations has not yet been determined due to a lack of dedicated staff.

- Comments

AMAQ-SUP seizes a maximum number of opportunities, especially through international projects and calls, to continue its development and improve its practices. However, although the recommendations of the previous HAQAA support visit have been implemented, AMAQ-SUP has not yet implemented the recommendations of the UEMOA/CAMES project experts in order to carry out improvement actions. The implementation of such recommendations also does not appear to be scheduled.

- Judgement

AMAQ-SUP is the only African agency that volunteered for a consultancy visit during HAQAA1, and then for an assessment visit during HAQAA2, which indicates a willingness on the part of its managers to learn and improve through external “eyes” and to align with the ASG-QA. It should be noted that this standard may be difficult to apply in the early years of the agencies.

4. GOOD PRACTICES

The panel affirms that ANAQ-GN, despite its recent creation, has made tremendous progress over the past three years, and is on track with the implementation of its strategic plan. The agency does this by inviting all its stakeholders to become involved in the development of quality assurance in the Republic of Guinea.

The evaluation of the file (self-assessment report and annexed documents) and the meetings with all the stakeholders during the visit enabled the expert committee to note that ANAQ-GN’s reference systems and practices are largely based on the ASG-QA.

Although there were no rankings or comparisons, it was found that this agency, with its good quality assurance practices, can become a reference in the region and serve as a model (in addition to the Senegalese agency) for newly created or emerging agencies.

5. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Although many efforts and actions have been taken, it should not be forgotten that many agencies were born or will be born in countries where, historically, higher education policies were centralised and decisions were made only by the ministerial authority. This requires a change of paradigms to achieve performance and a strong commitment from government authorities to ensure that accountability, continuous improvement, evaluation (internal and external), responsibility, participatory approaches, traceability, consultation with stakeholders, autonomy, independence, commitment to the community and learning outcomes are not just empty words.

It is this change in culture, consistent with the strategies to be put in place, that will ensure that agencies are on the “right track”, the track laid out by the ASG-QA, to succeed in this challenge, taking into account the additional recommendations below.

5.1. Recommendations for QA agencies

- The Agency must establish, implement, maintain and continuously improve its practices and standards, in harmony with regional and continental requirements (ASG-QA);
- Agency management must demonstrate leadership and commitment to its missions by ensuring that the policy, vision, goals and strategy are well described, established and planned, and consistent with the agency’s context;
- Continue the dissemination of quality assurance guidelines and procedures, training and support for HEIs (teachers, administrative staff, CIAQ members, students, etc.);
- Establish and maintain a charter of ethics and professional conduct, make it available and communicate it;
- Strengthen the organisational, operational, and official performance independence of Agencies, in order to strengthen the effectiveness and relevance of agency strategies, practices, and activities;
- Develop a strategic plan based on a formalised vision and a budget plan in order to achieve the targeted objectives within the given timeframe and with the human resources identified beforehand;
- Develop a functional mechanism to follow up on the recommendations of external evaluations conducted by the agencies, in order to assist in the continuous improvement of quality in HEIs and their training programmes;
- Consider gender issues in recruitment with a view to achieving better gender balance;
- Support public and private higher education institutions in setting up their quality assurance units and in training their staff;
- Consolidate and strengthen the credibility, independence, autonomy, impartiality, objectivity and transparency of agencies;
- Put in place mechanisms to recruit and motivate external experts to help ensure the Agency’s independence;
- Publish reports and decisions from assessments and accreditations;

- Increase Agency participation in initiatives to harmonise quality assurance at the regional, African and global levels;
- Gradually broaden the scope of evaluation and accreditation activities to cover all fields and all public and private higher education institutions;
- To create the conditions for a better involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the agencies' mission by setting up periodic consultations with stakeholders (employers, students, alumni, etc.) on the fundamental aspects of the evaluation policy and external quality assurance;
- Provide Agencies with an integrated information system to facilitate data management and analysis;
- Review the composition of certain Boards of Directors in such a way as to guarantee their independence while reducing the representativeness of the Ministries and introducing new members recognised for their independence and expertise;
- Train and then involve students as members in external evaluation committees;
- Ensure that the support of the Agency from the highest authorities is continuous and sustainable;
- Clarify in the Agency's texts the roles and tasks of the various bodies and persons involved in its activities;
- Implement a strategy for participatory (from conception to adoption) and inclusive development of repositories, guidelines and other reference documents by all stakeholders;
- Develop and implement a stakeholder outreach and engagement strategy to support the Agency's initiatives and activities;
- Institutionalize internal quality assurance within higher education and research institutions;
- Develop an assessment, accreditation, and decision-making mechanism that fosters the confidence of stakeholders in the national quality assurance system;
- Define a clear framework for the mobilization of financial resources that does not hinder the credibility of the agency and the effective implementation of its priority missions;
- Establish a clear and easily accessible communication system for the timely dissemination of information and results. This includes publishing a communication policy and strategy to ensure transparency of activities and visibility of the agency;
- Formalise exchanges and improve information sharing with institutions, both before and after the evaluation campaigns;
- The Agency must determine and provide the human resources necessary, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to meet its needs. This is essential to the effective implementation of the quality management system and the implementation the evaluation and accreditation mission of the Agency;
- The Agency shall determine, provide and maintain the environment necessary for the implementation of its internal and external activities;
- The Agency must provide training opportunities for its staff so that they may acquire the necessary skills for the realisation of their activities;
- The Agency must identify and select opportunities for improvement and undertake all actions necessary to achieve this. It must undergo periodic internal and external evaluations for the purpose of continuous improvement.

5.2. Challenges for QA agencies

Agencies existing or in the making need to engage in the most important challenges to be addressed and in the implementation of activities that seem the most difficult. This is because they are context and culture dependent and because their efforts are essential for higher education enable performance, recognition and sustainability. The most important and critical challenges are:

- Guarantee the full independence of the authority performing external QA (organisational independence, operational independence and independence for official results and final decisions);
- Ensure that transparency and provision of information about the agency ; its activities and results should be public, accessible and available, particularly to relevant stakeholders;
- Ensure the financial viability of the agency so that it can carry out its activities and achieve its objectives;
- Ensure that the agency's human resources are competent on the basis of initial or professional training, or appropriate experience. Where appropriate, take action to acquire the necessary skills and enable continuous improvement in practice;
- Engage all higher education stakeholders (internal and external) in the development of external QA methodologies, including employers and students;
- Balance the accountability and improvement aspects of the external QA process to ensure that higher education institutions/programmes meet the requirements of the ASG-QA and stakeholder expectations and needs.

5.3. Recommendations on the methodology used

- For the consultancy visits, it was more difficult to use the ASG-QA as an external evaluation tool, since the agencies visited (except for the Guinean agency, ANAQ-GN) do not fully function as agencies in terms of mission, vision, strategy, objectives, etc. Also, it was found that some of the standards reviewed were not relevant to the evaluation. One question to be asked is, in the future, should one assess only the agencies and rather provide a lighter service for QA systems under development?
- It is not clear that the consultancy visits can positively impact future agencies since it is not known if the individuals in the agencies visited will be among the future actors in the agency once it is established;
- Sufficient financial resources need to be mobilized to conduct future agency reviews under appropriate conditions and to allow for the integration of students in review panels and in site visits;
- Ensure that all activities (from the self-assessment to the validation of the report by stakeholders) are carefully planned to meet the deadlines;
- To avoid confusion in the assessments and ensure consistency between the reports. It would be wise to include a "strengths" section, a "weaknesses" section and an "opportunities for improvement" section in the report, for example;
- Although the preparation of the visits is done online, it would be desirable that the actual visits are done face-to-face for all the experts mobilised; this will bring a certain added value and will dispel many subjective perceptions;

- The drafting of evaluation reports must be harmonised in order to ensure fair decisions and improve in readability and impact. A meeting with the experts should be held before submission to fine tune and a training session could also be offered, if necessary. This is important to make them aware of possible discrepancies and biases, and to strengthen their judgment and writing skills;
- Although there were no reports of tension during the visits, it would be wise to establish and maintain a charter of ethics and professional conduct for visits, make it available and communicate it;
- It would be appropriate for agencies that wish to do so to establish a concrete follow-up process, integrated into the agency's review methodology, that would reinforce the impact of reviews and consultancy visits, while supporting a culture of continuous improvement.

6. GENERAL CONCLUSION

Following the 2018 assessment of the agency reviews piloted under HAQAA1, this second round of agency reviews and consultancy visits provided a clearer picture of how the ASG-QA align to and also inspire QA agency activities. It also helped to assess the implementation of external QA in African countries, which remains a fairly novel practice.

Overall, participating agencies and departments found the review experience to be positive, with beneficial outcomes, but would have liked to see the visits conducted entirely in a face-to-face mode, which would add greater value.

Of note, the fact that all of the proposed standards were adequately addressed is a strong indication that ASG-QA is broadly adequate to examine external QA processes and agency work. In addition, the reports provide a picture of the wide variety of situations among the six pilot cases, showing that ASG-QA allow sufficient room to accommodate this diversity while providing comparable results.

There was some consistency in the structure and format of the review reports (due to the template provided), although there were some differences and shortcomings in the approach to content development, particularly in the judgments section, which appears to be due to misunderstandings. Therefore, there is a need to train the experts to strengthen their judgments and writing skills before they conduct the reviews. In the future, consistency of reporting will be an important issue, especially if the results are to be used to make judgments/decisions and have formal consequences.

With regard to the implementation of external QA in the continent, progress is notable and changes are perceptible. Many new agencies have been born and have integrated good practices aligned with the ASG-QA, while many others are in the gestation or creation phase with projects supported by legal texts that are more or less in line with the requirements of the ASG-QA; the major challenges being the implementation of these texts, particularly with regard to the autonomy and independence of the agency. It is these future objectives, among the most important, that are most relevant to the agencies.