

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE ESG and HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

NAKVIS approach



n·a·k·v·i·s

Nacionalna agencija Republike Slovenije
za kakovost v visokem šolstvu

s·q·a·a

Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

Dr. Franci Demšar
Director

25-27
September
2023

www.nakvis.si

STANDARDS FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

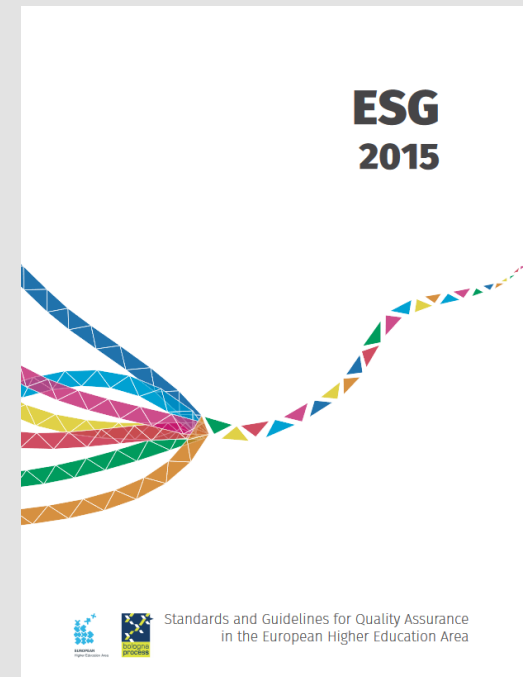
2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance described in Part 1 of the ESG.

System of ESG standards is well balanced and covers most important aspects of quality assurance requirements. Omitting standards in evaluation can seriously limit effectiveness of quality assurance.

NAKVIS: Our regulations are aligned with the national legislation and ESG. The standards and guidelines of Internal Quality Assurance (ESG part 1) are addressed in the Accreditation Criteria and cover all of the Agency's processes.

Internal QA



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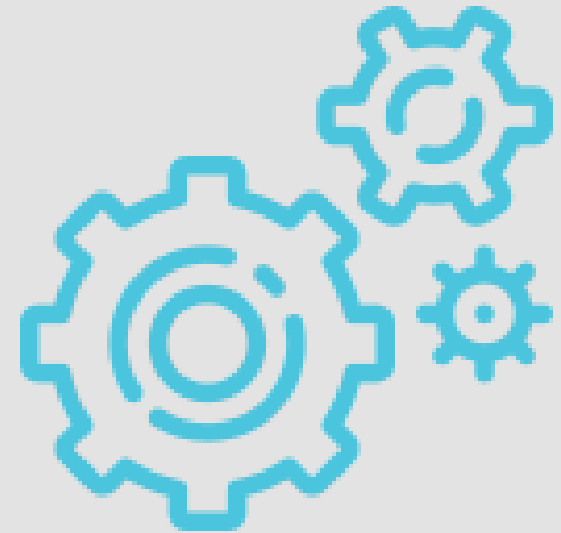
2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

- Support for HEI
- Work load, cost for HEI

NAKVIS: Slovenian HEA is developing, we had reaccreditation of study programs (no need anymore – change of law). We plan targeted accreditations, simplified accreditation of joint programs that are part of European university scheme. The communication plan ensures that all stakeholders are involved.

Methodologies fit for purpose



STANDARDS FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

2.3 Implementing processes

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and **published**. They include

- a self-assessment or equivalent;
- an external assessment normally including a site visit;
- a report resulting from the external assessment;
- a consistent follow-up.

NAKVIS: Law on higher education (plan: law on QA), by-laws, Guide to Accreditation and evaluation procedures, integration of follow-up and sample evaluations.

Implementing processes



GUIDE TO EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS

STANDARDS FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

2.4 Peer-review experts

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

- Selection (conflict of interest)
- Skills (experts on field of study program)
- Training

NAKVIS: applications in English and Slovenian so that experts from abroad can be used (not just from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia), continuous public calls for new experts (deficiency fields), ENQA call for new foreign experts, cooperation with ESU (inclusion of foreign students).

Peer-review experts



SQAA – Call for international experts

The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency (SQAA / NAKVIS) is issuing an open call for international experts who would be interested in participating in SQAA procedures. Selected experts will be added to the SQAA database for international experts. The call is open to university teaching staff with experience in quality assurance in higher education. The application deadline is set for **15 February 2022**.

About SQAA:

The fundamental activity of the SQAA is the accreditation and evaluation procedures. The latter cover comprehensive and in-depth assessment of quality of higher education institutions (universities, faculties, academies and professional colleges), higher vocational colleges and study programmes. The SQAA establishes whether a higher education institution or a higher vocational college complies with quality standards by areas of assessment referred to in the criteria adopted by the SQAA council as the highest decision-making body.

The group of experts:

In accreditation and evaluation procedures, the SQAA appoints a group of at least three experts, of which at least one member is a student and at least one member is a **foreign expert**. Experts operate on the basis of professionalism, impartiality and legality principles. Based on the documentation for assessment and the visit of a higher education institution or a higher vocational college, the group of experts conducts an assessment and writes a report. The experts who participate in panels are appointed by the SQAA Council. The purpose of this public call is to further upgrade the SQAA database of reliable foreign experts.

Requirements for foreign experts:

- Fluency in English
- Accomplished writing skills
- Cooperation and communication skills
- Experience of cooperation with quality assurance agencies in the capacity of institutional/programme evaluation expert
- Academic rank of assistant professor, associate professor or full professor
- Experience in HE administration / management
- Familiarity with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education (ESG) 2015

Financial compensation and other information:

The expert fee depends on the procedure. Usual fee for an external evaluation is 650 € per site visit day (gross) with all additional work expenses covered (travel, accommodation, etc.). The foreign experts will be provided with English translations of all relevant documents of the assessment plus additional onsite translation with a qualified interpreter if necessary.

STANDARDS FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

2.5 Criteria for outcomes

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and **published criteria** that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

NAKVIS: Rules of procedure for the NAKVIS Council –transparent insight into the decision-making process; Guide to external assessments – understanding the criteria and the procedures; Communication protocol - key guidelines on communication in the procedures

Criteria for outcomes

Transparency of procedures and results:

When others know that their activities are visible, they start to behave accordingly

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2.6 Reporting

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

NAKVIS: Complete redesign of our website – content + accessibility. All reports (negative and positive) are published, plus additional info on each institution (basic data, research activity, enrolment info, international accreditations, presentation films). Extensive promotional activities to promote the website (social media, events, newsletter). Development of internal IT system iNakvis to help with the reporting and analytics.

Reporting

Transparency,
EHA requirement,
DEQAR

STANDARDS FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

2.7 Complaints and appeals

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Very important standard – we are happy that we have a plenty of formal possibilities for appeal and complaint.

NAKVIS: in last years their number has decreased substantially (year of accreditation, follow up, withdrawal of application – 1/3); formal procedure of complaints (website, ZUP, Criteria) and appeals (ZViS and ZUP).

Complaints and
appeals

Appeal: formal
assurance
Complaint:
during the
process

STANDARDS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

NAKVIS: Communication plan (ways of strengthening communication with stakeholders) regular meetings visits to institutions events adoption of strategic documents guidelines action plans strong support of internal and external IT systems strong international cooperation, active involvement of the NAKVIS council.

Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Professionalism



STANDARDS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

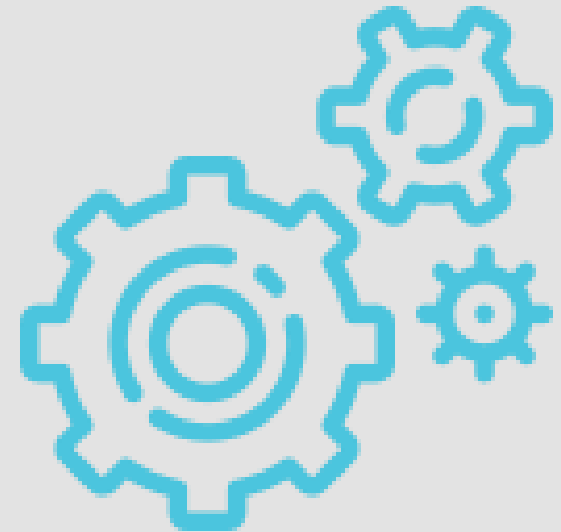
3.2 Official status

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognized as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

NAKVIS: Established in 2010, authority according to ZViS, activities to adopt Act on Quality, full member of EQAR, ENQA, CEENQA, INQAAHE.

Official status

1 st step



STANDARDS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

3.3 Independence

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

No stakeholder prevails in decision taking bodies.

NAKVIS: Formal independence – defined in acts and regulations. Activities to adopt own Act on Quality.

Analytical work: Independence of Quality Assurance Agencies (study), publication in CEENQA, cooperation with foreign agencies – sharing good practices in the field of independence.

Independence



INDEPENDENCE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

PROCEEDINGS OF A WORKSHOP ORGANISED
BY CEENQA ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2022

STANDARDS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

3.4 Thematic analysis

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Evaluations are not bureaucracy, but a process of making recommendations for HE institutions

NAKVIS: yearly thematic analyses, yearly conferences, yearly publication, guidelines if possible (guide to external evaluations, online evaluations, hybrid teaching and learning). NAKVIS has a department for analytics, it has 4 PhD students with their thesis connected to QA activities (independence, employability, ..), document Methodology and procedure for the production and dissemination of thematic analyses.

Thematic analysis

GUIDELINES FOR DISTANCE EVALUATION



GUIDELINES FOR A HYBRID APPROACH
IN TERTIARY EDUCATION



STANDARDS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

3.5 Resources

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

- Budget
- Yearly fees
- Fee per application

NAKVIS: If budget is insufficient, activities should be modified (example: program re-evaluation). NAKVIS adopted the Human resources development plan – constant development and education.

Resources

Enough employees

Reimbursements for experts

Employees for analysis and International cooperation

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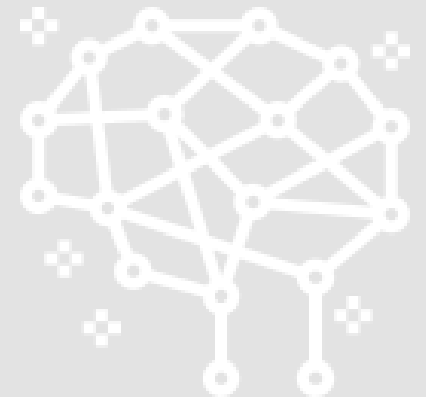
3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

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

NAKVIS 2018: did not publish negative outcomes, did not have follow up, did not have a clear complain and appeal policy, limited scope of thematic analysis,...

NAKVIS 2023: constant improvement, yearly progress report, active involvement of stakeholders (internal and external), results of last ENQA evaluation (fully compliant on all standards)

Internal QA



STANDARDS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.G.

NAKVIS : With the participation of NAKVIS in four subsequent external ENQA reviews (2023 - targeted) the agency complies with the standard.

Cyclical external review



Thank you for your attention!

September 2023

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Director



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