



Template of the Proposal for the Accreditation of the Institution's Internal Quality Assurance System

January 2018

Introductory Note

This document constitutes a template for the structure and content of the proposal drafted by Higher Education Institutions for the accreditation of their Internal Quality Assurance Systems (IQAS). Its structure is consistent with the main principles of the “Standards for Quality Accreditation of the Internal Quality Assurance System” published by HQA in November 2016 which is in line with both the accreditation criteria (L. 4009/2011, Art. 70 - 72) and with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

Institutions wishing to draft a Proposal for the Accreditation of their Internal Quality Assurance System must use this template which includes the principles and guidelines of the IQAS Quality Standards as well as indicative points of reference for each quality standard aiming at supporting HEIs in drafting their Proposal. The Proposal should be self-standing and self-explanatory, not exceeding forty (40) pages in length. Where reference is made to articles or provisions of regulatory texts (Statutes of the Institution, Quality Manual, Rules of Procedure of the Institution etc.), these must be attached to this document.

HQA remains at the disposal of the stakeholders and is always eager to offer its services aiming at quality assurance and improvement of Higher Education Institutions.

January 2018

Proposal for the Accreditation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS)

Institution (*name*):

Date of submission:

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1. INSTITUTION POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND ADJUSTED ACCORDING TO THE INSTITUTIONS' AREAS OF ACTIVITY. IT SHOULD ALSO BE MADE PUBLIC AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL PARTIES INVOLVED.

The quality assurance policy is the guiding document which sets the operating principles of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), the principles for the continuous improvement of the Institution, as well as the Institution's obligation for public accountability. It supports the development of quality culture, according to which, all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance. This policy has a formal status and is publicly available.

The policy for quality is implemented through:

- *the commitment for compliance with the laws and regulations that govern the Institution;*
- *the establishment, review, redesign and redefinition of quality assurance objectives, that are fully in line with the institutional strategy.*

This policy mainly supports:

- *the organisation of the internal quality assurance system;*
- *the Institution's leadership, departments and other organisational units, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance;*
- *the integrity of academic principles and ethics, guarding against discriminations, and encouragement of external stakeholders to be involved in quality assurance;*
- *the continuous improvement of learning and teaching, research and innovation;*
- *the quality assurance of the programmes and their alignment with the relevant HQA Standards;*
- *the effective organisation of services and the development and maintenance of infrastructure;*
- *the allocation and effective management of the necessary resources for the operation of the Institution;*
- *the development and rational allocation of human resources.*

The way in which this policy is designed, approved, implemented, monitored and revised constitutes one of the processes of the internal quality assurance system.

INDICATIVE POINTS OF REFERENCE

- Please state the Institution's Quality Policy Statement;
- Please specify how the Quality Policy is linked with the Institution's strategy;
- Please specify how the Quality policy is communicated.

2. PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NECESSARY RESOURCES

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE APPROPRIATE FUNDING FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES, RESEARCH, AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL. RELEVANT REGULATIONS SHOULD BE IN PLACE TO ASSURE THAT ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH ARE AVAILABLE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE (E.G. CLASSROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRAIRIES, IT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROVISION OF FREE MEALS, DORMITORIES, CAREER GUIDANCE AND SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES, ETC.).

Funding

The Institution ensures adequate funding to cover not only the overhead and operational costs (regular budget and public investment budget) but also costs related to research, innovation and development (Special Account for Research Funds, Property Development and Management Company). The financial planning and the operation of an effective financial management system constitute necessary tools for the full exploitation of the resources.

Infrastructure

Based on the requirements and needs arising during its operation, the Institution has determined ways to define, allocate and maintain all the necessary resources to ensure its smooth and proper functioning, i.e. teaching, research and auxiliary facilities, equipment and software, support facilities (cleaning, transportation, communication) etc. The scope of the IQAS should include a suitable managing and monitoring system to safeguard the infrastructure. Compliance to the internal regulations is also necessary.

Working environment

The Institution ensures -as far as possible- that the working environment has a positive effect on the performance of all members of the academic community (students and staff). Factors that are taken into consideration towards the creation of such a favorable environment are, among others, the sanitary facilities, the lighting/heating/ventilation system, the cleanliness and the overall appearance of the premises, etc. The scope of the IQAS should include an appropriate managing and monitoring system to promote a favorable working environment and to ensure compliance with the existing provisions.

Human resources

The Institution and the academic units are responsible for the human resources development. The subject areas, as well as the competences and tasks of the staff members are defined by the corresponding job descriptions that are established within the operation scope of each academic or administrative unit. These posts are filled following the requirements set by the law, on the basis of transparent, fair and published processes. The continuous training and evaluation of the staff is considered necessary for the enhancement of the performance, which is recorded and monitored as provided in the context of the IQAS.

The Institution should acknowledge and provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the IQAS, its enhancement and the provision of services that assist the satisfaction of the quality assurance requirements. Moreover, the Institution (Quality Assurance Unit-QAU) should properly organise the administrative structure and staffing of the IQAS, with a clear allocation of competences and tasks to its staff members.

INDICATIVE POINTS OF REFERENCE

- Please state the internal regulations on the allocation and management of: a) all kinds of funding, b) infrastructure & services and c) human resources;
- Please indicate the existing monitoring/managing systems of the infrastructure in general and of technical services (equipment, classrooms, public spaces, networks, provision of free meals, dormitories etc.);
- Please indicate the existing systems (procedures/actions) related to the selection, training and evaluation of human resources. Please make specific reference to the staffing of the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU), the competences and tasks of human resources and activities related to their training.

3. ESTABLISHING GOALS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE CLEAR AND EXPLICIT GOALS REGARDING THE ASSURANCE AND CONTINUOUS UPGRADE OF THE QUALITY OF THE OFFERED PROGRAMMES, THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS THE SCIENTIFIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES. THESE GOALS MAY BE QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE AND REFLECT THE INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY.

The Institution's strategy on quality assurance should be translated into time-specific, qualitative and quantitative goals which are regularly monitored, measured and reviewed in the context of the IQAS operation, and following an appropriate procedure.

Examples of quality goals:

- *rise of the average annual graduation rate of the Institution's Undergraduate Programmes to x%;*
- *upgrade of the learning environment through the introduction of digital applications on*;
- *improvement of the ratio of scientific publications to teaching staff members to*;
- *rise of the total research funding to y%*

The goals are accompanied by a specific action plan for their achievement, and entail the participation of all stakeholders.

INDICATIVE POINTS OF REFERENCE

- Please specify the goal and action planning with corresponding timetables, indicators and competent persons as regards their implementation against all of the Institution's areas of activity. In particular, goals may be mentioned related to:
 - ❖ the upgrading and continuous improvement of teaching;
 - ❖ the enhancement of research activity;
 - ❖ the improvement of the Institution's outward-looking orientation;
 - ❖ tackling specific problems or risks;
 - ❖ responding to recommendations from previous external evaluations of the Institution and/or its academic units;
- Please specify how the progress made towards achieving the goals is monitored and recorded;
- Please annex the Institution's overall strategy to this Proposal.

4. STRUCTURE, ORGANISATION AND OPERATION OF THE IQAS

INSTITUTIONS SET UP AND ESTABLISH AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM, WHICH INCLUDES PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES COVERING ALL AREAS OF ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS. SPECIAL FOCUS IS GIVEN ON THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING, INCLUDING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND GOVERNANCE.

The key goal of the internal quality assurance system (IQAS) is the development, effective operation and continuous improvement of the whole range of the Institution's activities, and particularly, of teaching, research, innovation, governance and relevant services, according to the international practices - especially those of the European Higher Education Area - and the HQA principles and guidelines described in these Standards.

Structure and organisation

In each Institution, the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) holds the responsibility for the administration and management of the IQAS. The QAU is set up according to the existing legislative framework and is responsible for:

- *the development of specialized policy, strategy and relevant processes towards the continuous improvement of the quality of the Institution's work and provisions;*
- *the organisation, operation and continuous improvement of the Institution's internal quality assurance system;*
- *the coordination and support of the evaluation process of the Institution's academic units and other services, and;*
- *the support of the external evaluation and accreditation process of the Institution's programmes and internal quality assurance system in the context of the HQA principles and guidelines.*

The Institution's IQAS and its implementation processes are determined by the decisions of the competent bodies, as provided by the law, and are published in the Government Gazette, as well as on the Institution's website. The above are reviewed every six years, at the latest.

To achieve the above goals, the QAU collaborates with HQA, develops and maintains a management information system to store the evaluation data, which are periodically submitted to HQA, according to the latter's instructions. The QAU is responsible for the systematic monitoring of the evaluation process and for the publication of evaluation-related procedures and their results on the Institution's website.

The QAU structure has been approved by the Institution's competent bodies, as provided by the law, while all competences and tasks accruing from this structure are clearly defined.

Operation

The Institution takes action for the design, establishment, implementation, audit and maintenance of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), taking into account the Standards' requirements, while making any necessary amendments to ensure fitness to achieve its aims.

The above actions include:

- *provision of all necessary processes and procedures for the successful operation of the IQAS, as well as implementation of the above processes and procedures on all of the Institution's parties involved ;the Institution's areas of activity can constitute the IQAS processes, e.g. teaching, research and innovation, governance, services etc. An IQAS process is an area of activity including data input, data processing and outputs. A procedure defines the way an action is implemented and includes a course of stages or steps, e.g. the curriculum design procedure;*
- *determination of how the IQAS procedures / processes are audited, measured and assessed, and how they interact;*
- *provision of all necessary resources to enable the IQAS function.*

Documents

The IQAS documentation includes, among other things, a series of key documents demonstrating its structure and organisation, such as the Quality Manual, which describes how the Standards' requirements are met.

The Annexes of the Quality Manual include:

- *the Quality Policy and the Quality Assurance Objectives;*
- *the necessary written Procedures, along with the entailed forms;*
- *the necessary Guides, External Documents (e.g. pertinent legislation), as well as any other supporting data;*
- *the standing organisational structure of the QAU, with a detailed description of the competences, the required qualifications and the goals for each post. The organisational chart is structured in a manner that ensures that the IQAS organisational requirements are fully and properly met.*

INDICATIVE POINTS OF REFERENCE

- Government Gazette (GG) document (annexed to the Proposal);
- Quality Manual (with attachments referred to herein –annexed to the Proposal);
- Please specify the main conclusions drawn since the entry into service of the QAU: main achievements and weaknesses;
- Please indicate any recommendations made during the Institution's last external evaluation, more specifically on the IQAS operation, and how they were addressed.

5. SELF-ASSESSMENT

THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM COMPRISES PROCEDURES PROVIDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE INSTITUTION'S ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS, ADDRESSING AREAS OF OVERSIGHTS OR SHORTCOMINGS, AND DEFINING REMEDIAL ACTIONS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SET GOALS, AND EVENTUAL IMPROVEMENT.

The QAU conducts, on an annual basis, a self-assessment of the IQAS, following the written procedure provided for each area of activity, which is implemented by a certain academic or administrative unit, as appropriate. The procedure determines the timing, the participants, the data under consideration, and the expected outcomes. The self-assessment aims at a final estimation of the suitability of the IQAS in force, as well as at basing decisions concerning the necessary remedial or precautionary actions for improvement.

The data considered in the context of the self-assessment of a programme may, for example, include:

- *students performance;*
- *feedback from students / teaching staff;*
- *assessment of learning outcomes;*
- *graduation rates;*
- *feedback from the evaluation of the facilities / learning environment;*
- *report of any remedial or precautionary actions undertaken;*
- *suggestions for improvement.*

The outcomes of the self-assessment are recorded in internal reports drawn up by the QAU. The reports identify any areas of deviation or non-compliance with the Standards, and are communicated to the interested parties (if appropriate). The Institution's resolutions concerning any modification, compliance, or enhancement of the IQAS operation might include actions related to:

- *the upgrade of the IQAS and the pertinent processes;*
- *the upgrade of the services offered to the students;*
- *the reallocation of resources;*
- *the introduction of new quality goals, etc.*

The outcomes of the self-assessment are recorded and, along with the source data, are archived as quality files.

A special procedure is followed for the compliance check of newly launched programmes (of all three cycles), or programmes that are to be reviewed shortly, prior to the institutional approval of the programme.

INDICATIVE POINTS OF REFERENCE

- Please describe shortly how the annual self-assessment of the Institution's academic/administrative units is carried out (please see the relevant chapter of the Quality Manual);
- Please make a short reference to the relevant process/procedure provided for in the Quality Manual as well as to how this process can be improved based on its operation so far (planning - evaluation - review) or/and the means or tools used for its implementation (forms, data, information system etc.);
- Please describe the procedure related to reassessment, readjustment and improvement of the IQAS operation;
- Please specify with whom and how has the QAU worked in drafting the Annual IQAS Report;
- Please indicate how and to what extent has the Annual Report been discussed by the Institution's bodies;
- Please specify the sources and procedures used to gather information;
- Please indicate the positive aspects and the difficulties that occurred during self-assessment as well as suggestions aiming at improving the process;
- Please indicate the conclusions drawn following completion of self-assessment as well as suggestions aiming at improving the Institution's functions/actions (e.g. provision of services to students, allocation of resources, training of the staff etc.).

6. COLLECTION OF QUALITY DATA: MEASURING, ANALYSIS AND IMPROVEMENT

INSTITUTIONS ARE FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE OF INFORMATION IN AN INTEGRATED, FUNCTIONAL AND READILY ACCESSIBLE MANNER, AIMING AT THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE QUALITY DATA RELATED TO TEACHING, RESEARCH AND OTHER ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS OF THOSE RELATED TO THE ADMINISTRATION.

The QAU should establish and operate an information system to manage the data required for the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System.

The QAU measures and monitors the performance of the various activities of the Institution, through appropriate procedures established in the context of the IQAS structure, and assesses their level of effectiveness. The measuring and monitoring is conducted on a basis of indices and data provided by HQA in the pertinent guidelines and forms, which are part of the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA). These measurements may concern: the size of the student body, the size of the teaching and administrative staff, the infrastructure, the structural components of the curricula, students' performance, research activity performance, financial data, feedback on student and faculty satisfaction surveys, data related to the teaching and research activity, services, infrastructure, etc.

The QAU makes use of the figures and presents the results for consideration using statistical analysis. Outcomes are displayed through histograms and charts. This sort of information is used by the Institution for decision making, at all levels, pursuing improvement, as well as for setting, monitoring, assessing and reviewing the Institution's strategic and operational goals.

INDICATIVE POINTS OF REFERENCE

- Please specify the Institution's information systems from which quality data are drawn e.g. QAU, student portal, financial management, project management (Special Account for Research Funds - ELKE), administrative management, etc.;
- Please indicate if you use a special IQAS software (QAU information system) as well as the data categories it manages and data sources used. Please specify the proportion covered by the IQAS information system compared with the NISQA;
- Please indicate whether there are specific plans in terms of further developing the Institution's IT infrastructure;
- Please specify the indicators or categories of indicators extracted from the information management systems and their connection with the existing IQAS quality objectives;
- Please specify whether student, alumni and teaching staff satisfaction surveys are regularly conducted as well as subject-specific inquiries addressed to employers and/or other bodies;
- Please specify how measurement analysis is conducted and how its outcomes are used. Indicate, for example:
 - ❖ How these measurements are used in decision-making;
 - ❖ Whether it is likely for benchmarking to be carried out among Institutions or quality systems etc.;

- ❖ Whether it is likely to use these measurements in order to boost the Institution's position in international university rankings.

7. PUBLIC INFORMATION

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR TEACHING AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN A DIRECT AND ACCESSIBLE MANNER. ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION SHOULD BE UP-TO-DATE, CLEAR AND OBJECTIVE.

The QAU publishes data related to IQAS structure, organisation and operation. Furthermore, the QAU publishes data pertinent to the institutional quality policy and objectives, as well as information and data relevant to the Institution's internal and external evaluation. In the context of the self-assessment process, the QAU verifies that adequate information regarding the teaching activities and, particularly, the programmes' profile and the overall institutional activity is publicly available. QAU makes recommendations for improvement, where appropriate.

INDICATIVE POINTS OF REFERENCE

- Please indicate the content of information published on the Institution's website per data section regarding a) the Institution, b) the QAU/IQAS, c) each academic unit (department) and d) the programmes offered;
- Please specify how the website maintenance and updating process is conducted regarding all of the above. Specify any sources reviewed and the human resources involved as support staff;
- Please indicate the evaluation procedure related to the adequacy/accuracy of the website operation and content;
- Please specify if any special web applications are included in the website operation, and if so, which ones.

8. EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF IQAS

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD BE PERIODICALLY EVALUATED BY COMMITTEES OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS SET BY HQA, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACCREDITATION OF THEIR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS (IQAS). THE PERIODICITY OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION IS DETERMINED BY HQA.

External quality assurance, in the case in point external evaluation aiming at accreditation, may act as a means of verification of the effectiveness of the Institution's internal quality assurance, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives. Additionally, it can provide information with a view to public acknowledgement of the positive course of the Institution's activities.

The Higher Education Institutions engage in periodic external quality assurance which is conducted taking into consideration any special requirements set by the legislation governing the operation of the Institutions and their academic units.

Quality assurance, in this case accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

INDICATIVE POINTS OF REFERENCE

Please indicate the most recent action plan, together with the timeline of actions drafted to assist the Institution in addressing the recommendations of the Committee of External Evaluation.

9. ANNEXES

1. IQAS GG document;
2. IQAS Quality Manual;
3. Rules of Procedure (related to its overall operation or specific sectors) of the Institution;
4. Quality Policy and quality goals setting of the Institution;
5. Strategic and Operational Planning of the Institution;
6. The set of required quality data included in the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) for the academic years 2015-2016, 2016-2017/ calendar years 2016, 2017 (to be printed from NISQA);
7. Other supporting documentation.