ESG 2015 (as adopted by ministers)	ESG 2005
Marked in **bold and underlined**: new elements	Marked in *italics*: still in the ESG, but differently worded
[Full text of the revised ESG](#)	Marked ~~strike-through~~: not part of the standards any more

Part 1: Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and **forms part of their strategic management**. **Internal stakeholders should** develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders[3].

1.1: Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards ~~of their programmes and awards~~. ~~They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work.~~ To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy *for the continuous enhancement of quality*. The strategy, policy and *procedures* should have a ~~formal status and~~ be publicly available. *They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.*

1.2 Design and approval of programmes[4]

Institutions should have processes for the **design and** approval of their programmes. **The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from**

1.2 Institutions should have *formal mechanisms* for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

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[3] Unless otherwise specified, in the document stakeholders are understood to cover all actors within an institution, including students and staff, as well as external stakeholders such as employers and external partners of an institution.

[4] The term "programme" in these standards refers to higher education provision in its broadest sense, including provision that is not part of a programme leading to a formal degree.

a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the **programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process**, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

1.3: *Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently*

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations **covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission**, progression, **recognition and certification**.

1.3: *Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.*

1.5 Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. **They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.**

1.4: Institutions should have *ways of satisfying themselves* that *staff involved with the teaching of students* are qualified and competent to do so. ~~They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.~~

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1.6 Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate **funding for learning and teaching activities** and ensure that adequate and **readily accessible** learning resources and student support are provided.

1.5: Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

1.7 Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

1.6: Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes *of study* and other activities.

1.8 Public information

Institutions should publish information about their **activities, including programmes**, which is **clear, accurate**, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

1.7: Institutions should ~~regularly~~ publish up to date, *impartial* and objective information, ~~*both quantitative and qualitative*~~, *about the programmes and awards they are offering*.

1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes **to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.**

1.2 Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the *approval*, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes *and awards*.

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1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

2.7: External quality assurance of *institutions and/or programmes* should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. ~~The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.~~

Part 2: Standards and guidelines 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.

2.1: External quality assurance procedures should *take into account* the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

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**.

2.2: The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by *all those responsible (including higher education institutions)* and *should be published with a description of the procedures to be used*.

2.4: All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

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2.3 Implementing processes

External quality assurance processes should be <u>reliable, useful</u>, pre-defined, <u>implemented consistently</u> and published. They include
 - a self-assessment or equivalent;
 - an external assessment <u>normally</u> including a site visit;
 - a report resulting from the external assessment;
 - a <u>consistent</u> follow-up.

3.7: The processes, *criteria and procedures* used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure *by the subject of the quality assurance process*;

- an external assessment by a group of experts, *including~~, as appropriate,~~ (a) student member(s)*, and site visits ~~as decided by the agency~~;

- *publication* of a report, *including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;*

- a follow-up procedure to *review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process ~~in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.~~*

2.6: Quality assurance processes ~~which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan~~, should have a *predetermined* follow-up procedure *which is implemented consistently*.

2.4 Peer-review experts

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

3.7: [...] an external assessment by a group of experts, including~~, as appropriate,~~ (a) student member(s), [...]

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2.5 Criteria for outcomes

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

2.3: *Any formal decisions* made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

3.7: The [...] criteria [...] should be pre-defined and publicly available.

2.6 Reporting

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

2.5: Reports should be published and should be written in a style, which is clear and readily accessible *to its intended readership*. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

2.7 Complaints and appeals

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

3.7 (Guideline): Agencies that make formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.

2.7: ~~External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.~~

Part 3: Standards and guidelines 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.**	3.1: The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account *the presence and effectiveness* of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines. 3.3: Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities *(at institutional or programme level)* on a regular basis. 3.5: Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

3.2 Official status

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.	3.2: Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities ~~in the European Higher Education Area~~ as *agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance* and should have an established legal basis. ~~They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.~~

3.3 Independence

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have **full** responsibility for their operations and the	3.6: Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and

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outcomes of those operations without third party influence.	that the *conclusions and recommendations made in their reports* cannot be influenced by third parties ~~such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders~~.

3.4 Thematic analysis

Agencies should <u>regularly</u> publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.	2.8: Quality assurance agencies should produce *from time to time* summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

3.5 Resources

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.	3.4: Agencies should have adequate and *proportional* resources, both human and financial, *to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es)* ~~in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures~~.

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Agencies should have in place processes for <u>internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities</u>.	3.8: Agencies should have in place *procedures* for their own accountability.

3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

<u>Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.</u>	3.8 Guideline: [...] A mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years. [...]