

Harmonisation, Quality Assurance
and Accreditation in Africa



Briefing note

HAQAA3 Agency Reviews

November 2023



This document has been produced under a contract with the European Union (HAQAA3). The opinions expressed are those of the contractor only and do not represent the contracting authority's official position.

What is an agency review?

RATIONALE AND PRINCIPLES

The principal aim of HAQAA3 Agency Reviews is to support the development of quality assurance agencies in line with [the African Standards for Quality Assurance \(ASG-QA\)](#) and to enhance the implementation of external quality assurance, with the following general goals:

- Enhancement-led review to evaluate the extent to which the agency/ministry meets the expectations of the ASG-QA.
- Supporting the development/establishment of national QA agencies in line with the ASG-QA.
- Raising awareness of ASG-QA and [Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework \(PAQAF\)](#).
- Facilitating discussion with stakeholders.
- Increasing visibility, trust and transparency.

The review will be based on the following principles:

- Agency reviews are a mechanism for quality attainment that takes into account each local context and aims at allowing an enhancement-led approach for the escalation of institutional and educational quality.
- The main aim of an external review is to evaluate whether and to what extent an agency complies with the standards in part B and C of the ASG-QA.
- The review is an evidence-based peer-review process carried out by independent experts.
- The process is transparent, and outputs are published.

Ultimately, the ASG-QA and the agency reviews based on them shall impact higher education systems in Africa and beyond by:

- Providing a common framework for QA in Africa.
- Developing mutual trust.
- Ensuring quality improvement and enhancement.
- Fostering transparency and accountability.
- Embedding a sustainable quality culture in higher education.
- Supporting the development of national QA systems and agencies that are aligned with the rest of the continent in terms of quality standards.

REVIEW OPTIONS

A) Agency reviews	B) Consultancy visits	C) Follow-up visits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For established QA agencies <u>Full review</u> against the ASG-QA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For new QA agencies and ministries that still have responsibility for external QA Review against <u>selected standards</u> of the ASG-QA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For agencies that had a full review in HAQAA1 or HAQAA2 Tailored review to follow up on the <u>recommendations made in the initial review</u>

THE REVIEW PROCESS

The review process has an estimated duration of 14 months. Upon the official registration, the agency will be provided with targeted training to complete the self-assessment report and follow the review process. Once the self-assessment report is completed and submitted (ca. 8 months after registration), a site visit will be carried out by an expert team (ca. 10 months after registration). A review report will be produced (final version sent to the agency ca. 14 months after registration) by the expert team based on the self-assessment report and the information collected during the site visit.



GETTING STARTED PT. 1: RESOURCES AND PLANNING

The agency under review shall plan for sufficient resources to undergo the review. For reviews taking place in the context of HAQAA3, the direct costs are covered by the HAQAA3 Initiative.

However, agencies/ministries should still ensure that they have sufficient human resources for the preparation and implementation of the exercise. Commitment in terms of time and resources to the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) needs to be planned in advance: the report should be an analytical, reflective, self-explanatory and self-standing document giving a precise picture of the current operations of the agency.

Likewise, adequate planning must be foreseen for the organisation of the schedule and logistics of the site visit (including inviting the interviewees), in collaboration with the HAQAA Technical Unit (coordinating body).

GETTING STARTED PT. 2: REGISTRATION

The agency review is initiated when an agency/ministry registers for it through a call launched by the HAQAA Technical Unit. Two calls will be launched in 2025 and 2026, but agencies need to prepare for them in advance. Agencies that are interested in a review are advised to contact the

HAQAA Technical Unit even if the call for participation has not been launched yet (note that the interim contact point is at ENQA: please contact luis.miranda@enqa.eu).

The registration form will require, among other information, to appoint a contact person, indicate the type of review that is requested and the motivation for doing so, and some brief contextual information about the agency. The HAQAA Technical Unit and the agency will agree on the contract and terms of reference of the review, including the activities to be subjected to the review as well as the overall timeline.

GETTING STARTED PT. 3: TRAINING

Targeted training activities will be provided by the HAQAA3 partnership for the staff of QA agencies and ministries selected for agency reviews and consultancy visits, on the ASG-QA, preparing a self-assessment report, protocol for organising a visit, etc.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The first main stage of the review process is the production of an analytical self-assessment report (SAR) by the agency under review. A guide of content will be provided in the HAQAA3 Guidelines for Agency Reviews (available soon). In the case of a second review or a follow-up visit, the SAR should also refer to the recommendations from previous reviews, underlining the related developments and highlight other changes in the agency since the last review.

Once the SAR is submitted to the PAQAA Technical Unit, the review coordinator will screen the report to check that it covers all the necessary elements. If needed, the agency will be given two weeks to revise the report. The final SAR is sent to the review panel at least six weeks before the site visit and is published on the agency's and HAQAA3 websites.

EXTERNAL REVIEW: SITE VISIT BY EXPERT TEAM

The external review is conducted by a panel consisting of a review chair, review secretary and two more panel members (one of them a student), all coming from the African higher education sector or with relevant expertise in it. For agency reviews and follow-up visits, the task of the review panel is to evaluate the agency's activities and provide their view on whether it is acting in compliance with the ASG-QA, as well as discussing areas of achievement or where improvements are required. In the case of consultancy visits, the ministry or agency is evaluated against a selection of key standards and the focus is on the steps needed for the further development of an independent and operational agency. In all cases this is done by thorough assessment of the SAR and additional material such as the website and requested documents, and a site visit to the agency. The visit is usually conducted in person and lasts 2.5 days (an online site visit is possible in cases of force majeure). The first draft of the site visit schedule is proposed by the review secretary and is then finalised in consultation with the agency one month before the visit.

The purpose of the site visit is to verify and expand on the information provided in the SAR. It is also an opportunity for the agency to discuss its activities and development. The site visit will include interviews with the agency's management, staff and key internal and external stakeholders.

REVIEW REPORT

The panel drafts an external review report, which includes evidence and analysis regarding the agency's compliance with the ASG-QA. The agency is then given two weeks to review the draft report for factual corrections and then it is scrutinised by the HAQAA Technical Unit for clarity and consistency. The review report is considered to be final once validated by the HAQAA Technical Unit. The report will be published on the HAQAA3's website.

The report will include comments, recommendations, commendations and suggestions for further development. Note that the report may eventually include judgements of compliance against the individual standards of the ASG-QA and a holistic overall compliance judgement. HAQAA3 has initiated a discussion with stakeholders on the notion of compliance with the ASG-QA to ultimately determine if compliance judgements should be integrated into full agency reviews. This decision will be communicated ahead of the first call for participation.

FOLLOW-UP

The follow-up of the review supports the agency in a continuous reflection and development of its work. Agencies are encouraged to submit a follow-up report within an agreed period after the validation of the final external review report. The report should demonstrate how it has addressed the recommendations made in the review report and explain any further significant changes or developments in the agency.

HAQAA3's timeline

Keep in mind the opportunity when doing strategic planning, especially taking into account the ["Getting Started"](#) sections in this note. Please let us know in advance if you are interested in a review, even if the call of participation has not been launched yet. To this end, please contact Luis Miranda at ENQA Secretariat (luis.miranda@enqa.eu).

FORESEEN ACTIVITIES

Early reviews (pre-selected agencies ahead of the first call for participation) (only full reviews will be done in this phase)	2024-2025
First call for participation	Early 2025
First round of targeted trainings for agencies undergoing a review	2025
First round of reviews and consultancy visits	2025-2026
Second call for participation	End 2026
Second round of targeted trainings for agencies undergoing a review	Early 2027
Second round of reviews and consultancy visits, including training for agencies	2027-2028