African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA)

Presented at:

HAQAA-3 Training Course for Technical Staff from National Quality Assurance Commissions/Councils/Agencies/National Authorities/Ministries for Higher Education (17th November 2026)

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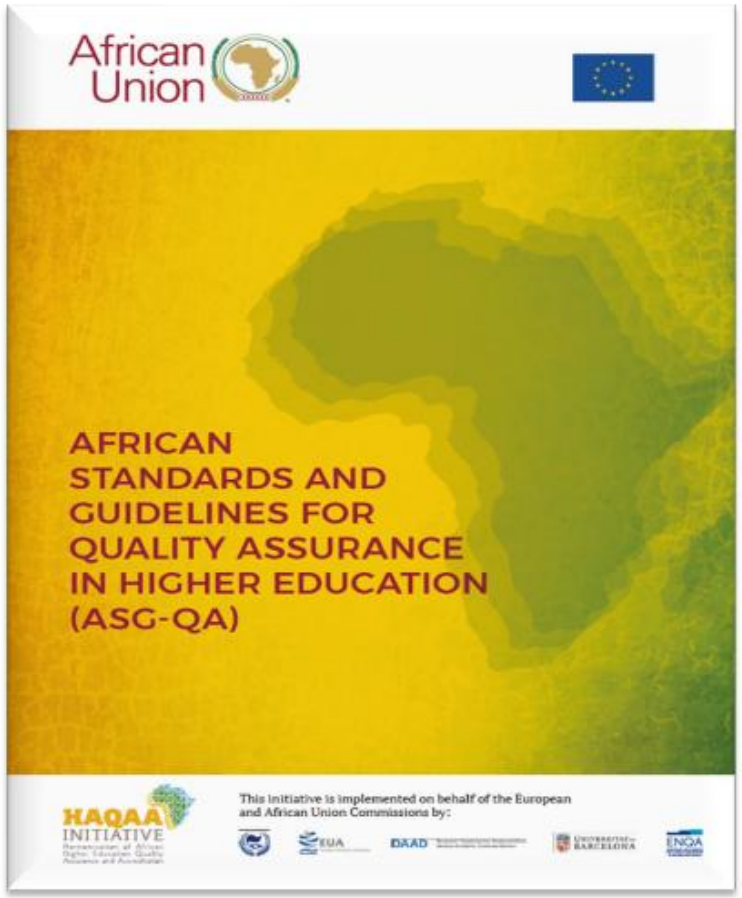
enqa. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

ORIENTATION OBJECTIVES

What will this Webinar Session Cover?

- ❑ What are the ASG-QA?
- ❑ How were the ASG-QA created/formulated/developed?
- ❑ For what purpose? Scope?
- ❑ What are the principles underlying ASG-QA?
- ❑ What parts are they composed of? Content of each part.
  - Focus on part B and C – relevance for agencies

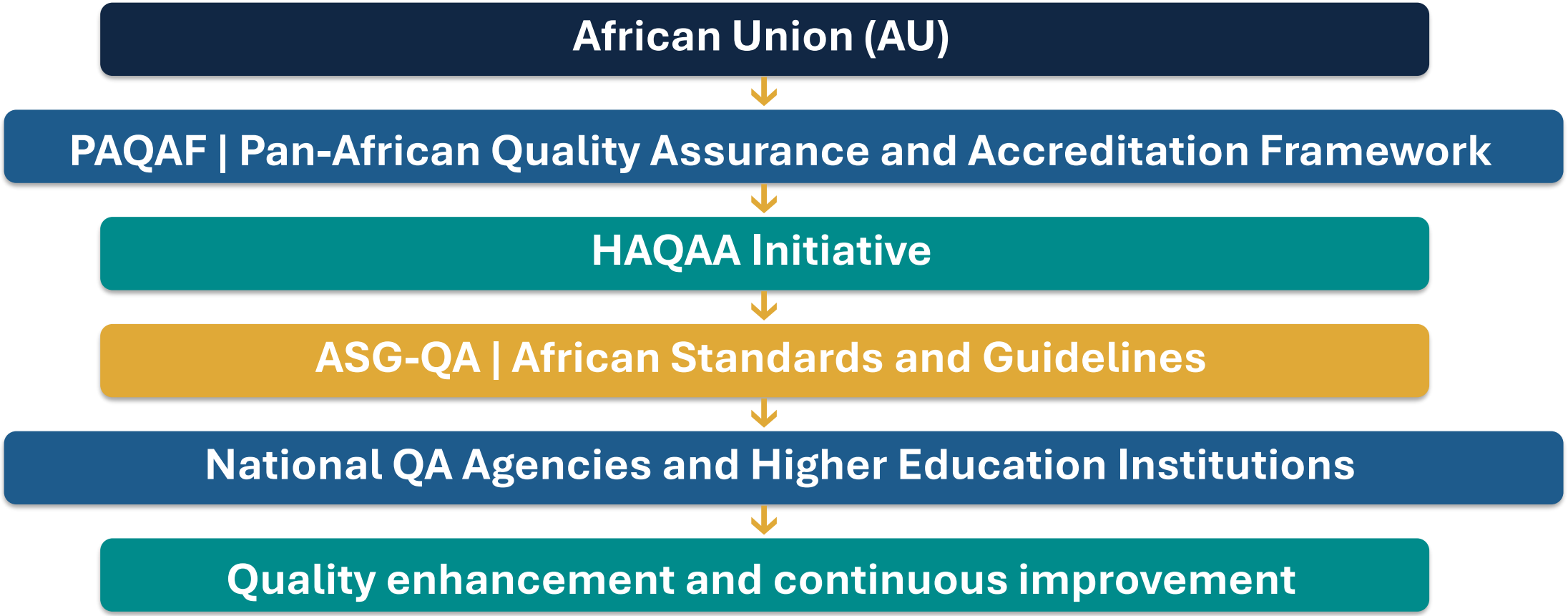
What are the ASG-QA?



- A set of non-prescriptive, but flexible standards and guidelines for IQA and EQA in higher education in Africa.
- Provide an overarching framework for QA in higher education in Africa.
- **Standards** – common minimum requirements.
- **Guidelines** – more specific terms to advise HEIs and QAAs on the best way to address each standard and allow for the collection of evidence in support of their status of quality.

The ASG-QA were launched in December 2018 and are available in the four languages of the African Union, i.e. English, French, Portuguese and Arabic.

ASG-QA Within the Continental Quality Assurance Architecture



ASG-QA operationalises shared continental quality principles through institutional and agency-level practice.

Purpose for Developing the ASG-QA

1. Have a common framework and understanding of QA systems for teaching and learning among all stakeholders at continental, regional and national level;
2. Develop mutual trust resulting in recognition and mobility of students and staff in Africa;
3. Ensure quality improvement/enhancement in HEIs through self-assessment, external peer review and continuous M and E;
4. Promote transparency & accountability by providing accurate QA information to the public;
5. Support HEIs to develop a sustainable quality culture;
6. Promote international competitiveness of Africa's higher education system;
7. Support production of relevant teaching & learning resources, and student assessment instruments

ASG-QA Scope: who and what is covered?

- ❑ Applies to all types of higher education institutions in Africa, irrespective of mode or place of delivery, including transnational and cross-border provision.
- ❑ Covers the full student lifecycle and both undergraduate and postgraduate students unless otherwise stated.
- ❑ Staff coverage includes academic, research, administrative and technical/support staff unless otherwise stated.
- ❑ Should be applied in cognisance of existing qualifications frameworks and credit transfer/accumulation systems.
- ❑ Open and distance learning quality provision is incorporated in Part A.

ASG-QA Core Principles

Institutional Responsibility

- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are the primary custodians of quality & quality assurance.
- Quality assurance begins within the institution & remains its fundamental responsibility.

Respect for Institutional Autonomy

The autonomy, identity and integrity of HEIs are acknowledged and respected. Quality assurance mechanisms should support institutional improvement while preserving institutional independence.

Application of the Principles

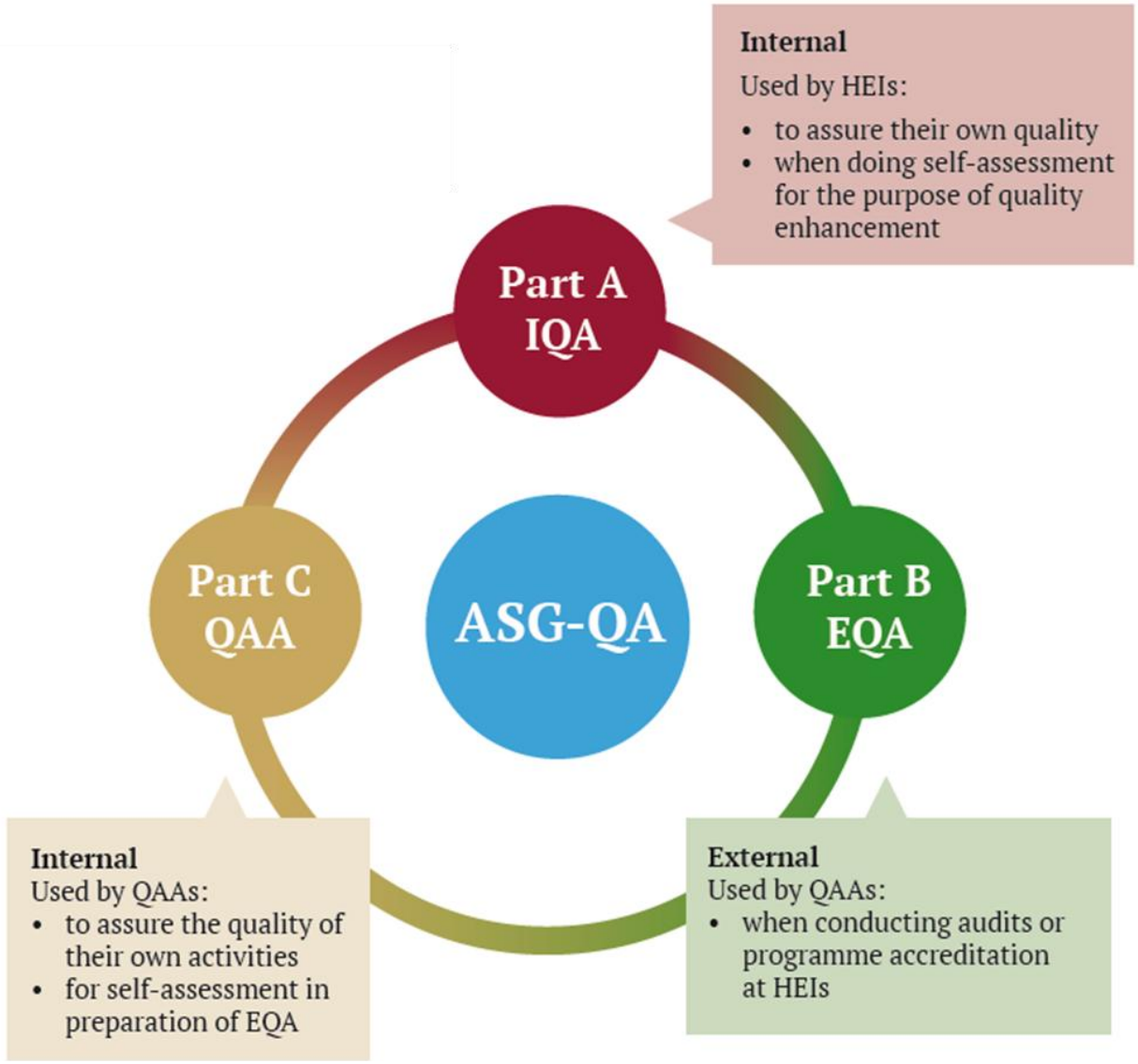
Principle	Practical Implication
Quality Ownership	HEIs take primary responsibility for assuring quality.
External QA	Complements, rather than replaces, institutional QA processes.
Institutional Diversity	Standards can be applied within different national and institutional contexts.
Evidence-Based Adaptation	HEIs and QAAs may adapt implementation approaches based on evidence.

ASG-QA Components

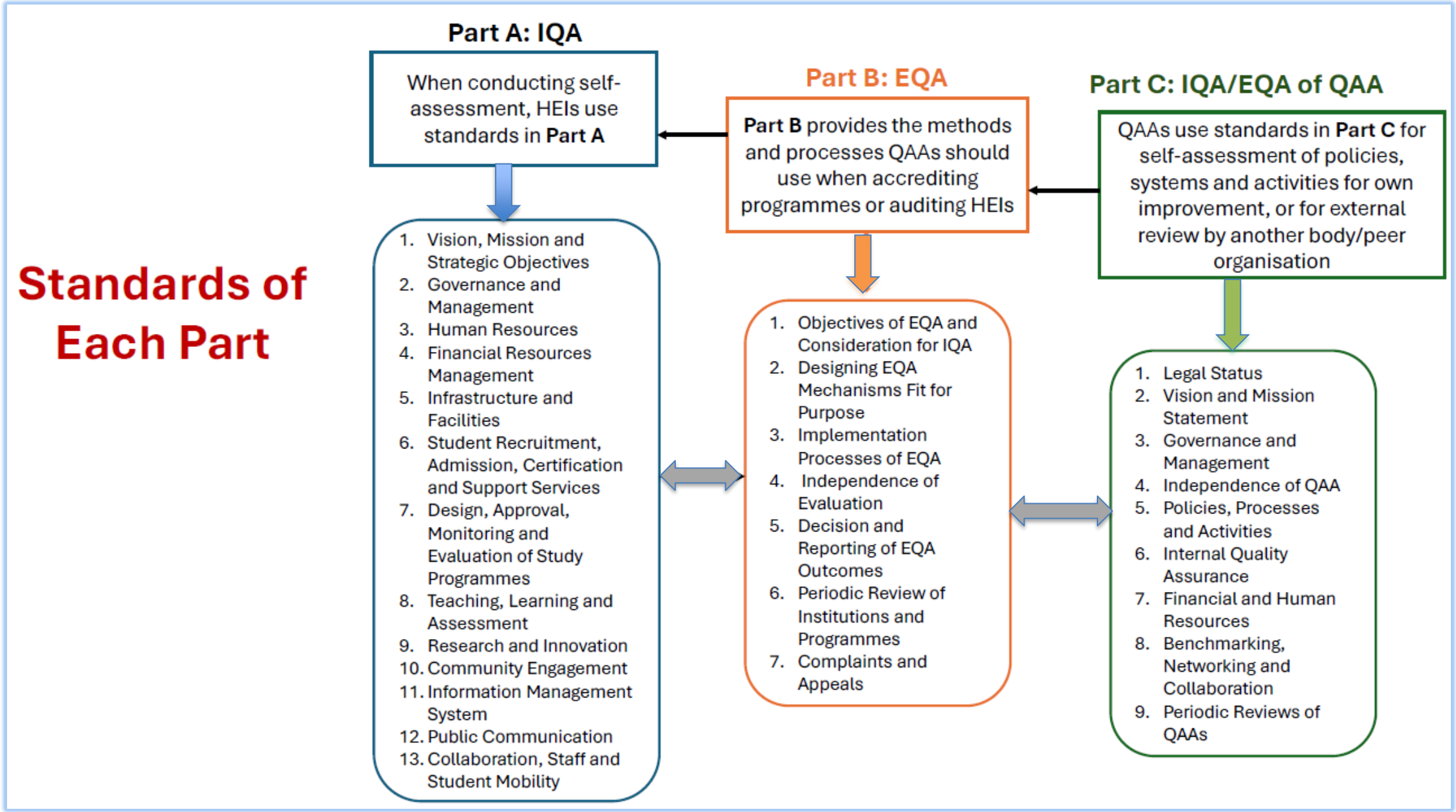
Part A: Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) of HEIs – has quality criteria which include open and distance learning (ODL)

Part B: External Quality Assurance (EQA)

Part C: Internal Quality Assurance for QA Agencies (QAA)



Standards of Each Part



PART B · STANDARD 1

Objectives of External Quality Assurance and Consideration for Internal Quality Assurance

STANDARD

"External quality assurance shall ensure that the higher education institution has clearly articulated vision and mission statements, and it shall help the institution ensure the effectiveness of its internal QA mechanisms, providing an additional instrument for assessing institutional quality."

GUIDELINES — IN BRIEF

- Recognises and supports the institution's own responsibility for QA.
- Helps entrench a quality culture and benchmark inputs, processes and outputs with other HEIs.
- Assesses capacity to offer programmes and compliance with legal requirements.
- Provides independent evidence to stakeholders, and wins recognition nationally and internationally.

PART B · STANDARD 2 — DESIGNING EQA MECHANISMS FIT FOR PURPOSE

STANDARD

"The standards, processes, and procedures for EQA shall be pre-defined, reliable, published, and consistently implemented for purposes of accountability."

GUIDELINES — IN BRIEF

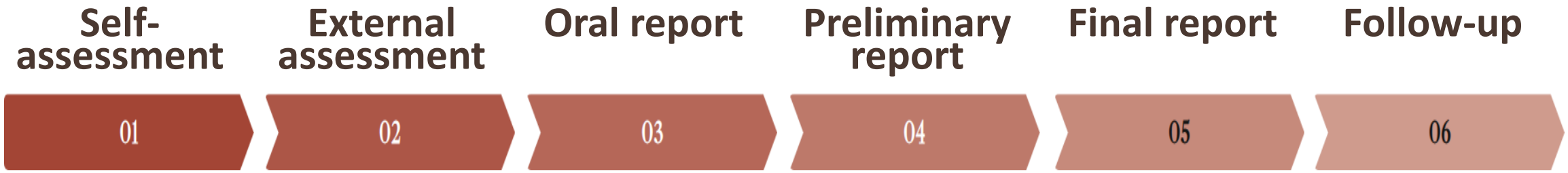
Standards and processes are created in consultation with stakeholders, so they address all academic activities of the system and earn acceptability. They include:

Programme-level
Standards and guidelines for periodic / cyclical programme accreditation, evaluation, assessment or audit.

Institutional-level
Standards and guidelines for periodic / cyclical institutional accreditation, evaluation, assessment or audit.

PART B · STANDARD 3 — IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES OF EQA

Every external review runs the same published six-step sequence;



Institution prepares & produces its SAR / SER.	Review of the SAR, site visit, stakeholder interviews & documentary evidence.	Delivered to management before the panel leaves the institution.	Provided to the institution before the final report is produced.	The final report of the external review.	Ensures the report's recommenda-tions are addressed.

PART B · STANDARD 4 — INDEPENDENCE OF EVALUATION

Credible judgements depend on the independence and competence of the panel

Standard

"EQA shall be carried out by panels of external experts drawn from a wide range of expertise and experience."

01 Selected and competent

Carefully selected, with appropriate skills, and inducted into EQA principles and procedures before the review.

02 Free of conflict

Independent in their judgements, with no conflict of interest, and they sign a Declaration of Independence.

03 Open to objection

The institution may object to any proposed panel member; involving international experts is good practice.

PART B · STANDARD 5 — DECISION & REPORTING OF EQA OUTCOMES

Standard

Reports and decisions made as a result of external quality assurance shall be clear, based on published standards, processes and procedures, and made accessible, for purposes of accountability.

Published with integrity

Decisions are published without undermining the integrity of the review process, and are free of external influence.

A complete report

States purpose, context, procedures and experts, evidence and findings, commendations, conclusions and recommendations.

Accurate and fair

The institution can point out factual errors, and is the first to receive the report before it is distributed to others.

A known format

Decisions arrive in a format already made known to the institution — commendations, recommendations and formal decisions.

PART B · STANDARD 6 — PERIODIC REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMMES

Standard

"External quality assurance of institutions and programmes shall be undertaken on a cyclical basis."

STANDARD

Institutional review is carried out preferably every five years, depending on the QA system's context.

GUIDELINES — IN BRIEF

- The length of the review cycle is clearly defined and published.
- For programmes, the cycle matches the programme's duration or the validity of its accreditation period.
- Every cyclical review results in a report of general findings.

PART B · STANDARD 7 — COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard

The procedure for lodging complaints and appeals shall be clearly defined and communicated to the institution concerned.

a An established appeals system is in place.

b The institution may raise concerns consistent with that appeals system.

c A procedure exists for addressing complaints raised by the general public.

d Complaints and appeals processes are clearly defined and consistently applied.

e Appeals and complaints are handled professionally, within an agreed period of time.

A defined appeals route safeguards the institution's rights and fairness

PART C · STANDARDS 1 & 2 — LEGAL STATUS · VISION & MISSION

1 Legal Status

Standard

The QAA shall be an autonomous legal entity with clearly defined mandate, scope and powers. It will be recognised as a quality assurance agency at a national/regional level.

- Established by an appropriate legal instrument, such as an Act or Statutes.
- Legal mandate specifies its functions, responsibilities and scope of QA activities.

2 Vision & Mission

Standard

The QAA shall have written and published vision and mission statements or objectives taking the higher education context into account.

- Quality assurance is shown to be a major activity of the agency.
- A systematic approach & a practical, resourced management plan deliver the objectives.
- Custodianship and oversight suit the agency's mandate.

PART C · STANDARD 3 — GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

Standard

"The QAA shall have clearly defined structures that ensure sound and ethical governance and management, including good practices of quality assurance that support its mission and legal mandate."

GUIDELINES — IN BRIEF

- Qualified, experienced leadership oversees best QA practices.
- Governance bodies — a board and committees — each with a clear mandate, powers, responsibilities and tenure.
- Procedures for appointing the board and Chief Executive, and for financial and management decisions.
- Clear communication of activities for public accountability, with regular stakeholder consultation.
- Integrity, honesty and non-discrimination, with fair processes for misconduct, complaints and appeals by staff.

PART C · STANDARD 4 — INDEPENDENCE OF THE QAA

Standard

The QAA shall be independent in its operations, outcomes, judgements and decisions.

I Organisational

Official documentation — legislative acts, statutes, instruments of governance — stipulate independence from HEIs, governments and other stakeholders.

II Operational

The agency defines and runs its own procedures and methods, and nominates and appoints qualified external experts.

III Of outcomes

The final decision of quality assurance activities remains the responsibility of the QAA — not subject to change by third parties.

Independence runs through organisation, operation and outcomes alike

PART C · STANDARD 5 — POLICIES, PROCESSES AND ACTIVITIES

Standard

"The QAA shall undertake its quality assurance activities in accordance with the standards and guidelines articulated in Part B of the ASG-QA."

GUIDELINES — IN BRIEF

- The agency is transparent — it publishes its objectives, scope of work, expertise and interaction with HEIs.
- EQA standards suit the institution's core activities: teaching, research, engagement, resources and learning outcomes.
- Reviews follow a set sequence: validation of self-assessment, peer panel, site visit, oral, preliminary and final reports, then follow-up.

PART C · STANDARD 6 — INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard

The QAA shall have in place policies and processes for its own internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of its activities.

Impartial & consistent

Decisions are objective, rigorous, thorough, fair and consistent — even when made by different panels.

Published & non-prescriptive

IQA policies are on its website; EQA standards are general, respect HEI autonomy, and assure transparency and accountability.

Professional & ethical

All involved act competently & ethically; feedback mechanisms drive continuous improvement and guard against discrimination.

Standards made available early

EQA standards are pre-determined, published and given to institutions ahead of procedures, with thematic analysis of review trends.

PART C · STANDARDS 7 & 8 — RESOURCES · BENCHMARKING & COLLABORATION

7 Financial & Human Resources

Standard

The QAA shall have adequate and appropriate human, financial and material resources to carry out its QA mandate effectively and efficiently.

- Adequate funding and facilities commensurate with its QA activities.
- Qualified staff recruited cognisant of gender, disadvantaged groups and persons with disabilities.
- Resources to improve practices and inform the public of its results.

8 Benchmarking, Networking & Collaboration

Standard

The QAA shall promote and participate in international initiatives, workshops and conferences, and collaborate with relevant bodies on QA to exchange and share experiences and best practices.

- Collaborates with professional and accreditation bodies; shares reliable QA information.
- Contributes to recognition conventions and bilateral / multilateral agreements on qualifications.
- Improves access to accurate information about recognised HEIs and providers.

An agency stays effective through adequate resources and active collaboration

PART C · STANDARD 9 — PERIODIC REVIEWS OF QAAs

Standard

"The QAA shall undergo periodic internal and external reviews for continuous improvement."

GUIDELINES — IN BRIEF

- Conducts a comprehensive internal self-assessment of its processes, practices and activities, including data analysis.
- Subjects itself to periodic external review by regional, continental or international QA bodies.
- Ensures required recommendations are disclosed and implemented for improvement.

Depending on context, the QAA's cyclical review is carried out preferably every five years.

Common QA implementation risks and practical safeguards

1. Compliance becomes a document-checking exercise → triangulate documents, data, observation and stakeholder testimony.
2. Standards are applied inconsistently → use reviewer guidance, calibration, moderation and decision records.
3. Conflicts of interest are handled informally → maintain declarations, screening, recusal and documented panel decisions.
4. Reports are descriptive but not analytical → require evidence, analysis, explicit findings and actionable recommendations.
5. Follow-up ends when the report is issued → assign action owners, deadlines, monitoring and closure evidence.
6. The agency assesses HEIs but neglects itself → schedule Part C self-assessment and external review.

Questions, Comments & Reflection

Participant Reflection

1. Which ASG-QA standard is strongest in your agency practice?
2. Which standard presents the greatest implementation gap or risk?
3. What one change can your technical team initiate within the next 30 days?
4. What support, authority or resources are needed from agency leadership?
5. How will you know that the change has improved quality?

Thank you for your attention!

Asante Sana! Obrigadu! Merci! Siyabonga! Tatenda! Zikomo!