

User Guide to the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance

HAQAA3 Training on External Quality Assurance (EQA)

Maputo, 17 November 2026

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Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Africa

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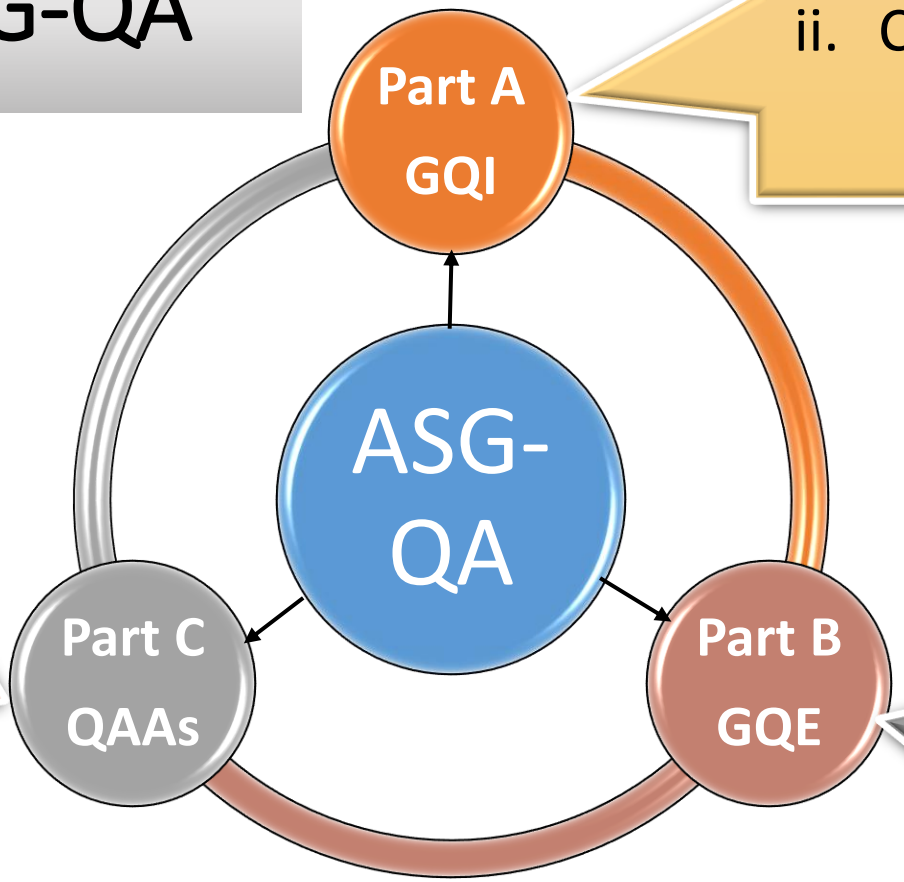
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Structure of the presentation

- Purpose of the ASG-QA User Guide
- Development of the guide
- Scope, application and content of the user guide
- Structure of the user guide
- User input to the QAA

Structure of the ASG-QA



Used by higher education institutions to:

i. Ensure their own quality
ii. Carry out self-assessment to improve quality

Used by quality assurance agencies to:

i. Ensure their own quality
ii. Carry out self-assessment in preparation for the external evaluation

Used by quality assurance agencies to carry out institutional evaluations or evaluations of courses and programmes at HEIs

Purpose of the ASG-QA user guide

To support the implementation of the ASG-QA by providing practical guidance and explanations:

- Clarifications to improve understanding and interpretation of the ASG-QA, particularly regarding aspects of the individual standards that proved challenging in the early years of use;
- Guidance on the implementation of the standards for HEIs and QAAs in the early stages of development;
- Examples of how HEIs and QAAs can demonstrate that they are fulfilling the ASG-QA commitments by undergoing internal or external evaluations.

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Development of the guide (1/2)

- Developed during HAQAA2 by the ASG-QA Task Force: quality assurance experts in higher education from East, West, North, Southern and Central Africa and the European Higher Education Area.
- Coordination: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education with the support of OBREAL Global.
- Significant contribution from pilot evaluations by quality assurance agencies during HAQAA1:
  - Analysis of the self-assessment reports produced by the agencies and ministries that took part in the pilot reviews and advisory visits;
  - Reports from the external evaluation panels;
  - Feedback from the agencies and ministries;
  - Feedback from the experts who conducted the evaluations

Development of the guide (2/2)

- Virtual focus groups held between April and June 2020 to gather feedback.
- The main conclusions discussed by the task force formed the basis for the drafting of the user guide .
- Various approaches were adopted for the development of the guide: two groups, one for Section 1 (IQA of HEIs) and the other for Section 2 (EQA).
- Initial drafts were circulated to task force members for input, followed by meetings for discussion and critical reflection, additional comments, contributions and improvements.
- An interim version was shared with a group of 'HAQAA ambassadors' in Quality Assurance in higher education to solicit further input.
- The final version of the guide was submitted to the African Union Commission for review and approval prior to its publication.

ASG-QA User Guide

1 Target audience
Who it is written for

- Quality assurance professionals at higher education institutions,
- Quality assurance professionals at quality assurance agencies,
- Experts who carry out external evaluations of QA agencies,
- Any organisation.

2 Scope and application
What the manual is — and is not

- No standards or requirements additional to the ASG-QA itself.
- Illustrative examples; neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.
- Encouragement of their use in support national standards and regulatory requirements in each country.
- Structured in the same way as the ASG-QA.
- Should be read in conjunction with the ASG-QA.

3 Contents of the manual
What you'll find inside

- Further explanation of the key concepts and terminology relating to quality assurance.
- Examples of key points and/or guidance questions.
- Examples of best practice for each standard.
- Examples of how compliance with each standard can be demonstrated through a self-assessment and/or external assessment.

Structure of the user guide

- ASG-QA: the main point of reference, as it guided its development.
- Presented in tabular format to facilitate consultation of the various standards, guidelines, key focus areas and examples of good practice or evidence.
- The guide comprises two sections:
  - Section 1 – Standards and Guidelines for IQA (Part A of the ASG-QA); and
  - Section 2 – divided into two parts: (i) Standards and Guidelines for EQA (Part B of the ASG-QA), and (ii) Standards and Guidelines for IQA for External Quality Auditors (Part C of the ASG-QA).
- Section 1: it is extensive because HEIs need to take responsibility for fostering and maintaining their own quality and, in doing so, must ensure that IQA is sufficiently robust to prepare them for all types of EQA activities, such as programme accreditation and institutional accreditation. This section also includes standards and guidelines for open and distance learning (ODL).

Part B: Objectives of EQA and Considerations regarding EQA

Standard 1. EQA should ensure that the HEI has clearly articulated vision and mission statements and should help institutions ensure the effectiveness of their EQA mechanisms by providing an additional tool for assessing institutional quality

Standard	Key points: guiding questions	Examples of good practice – evidence
EQA complements an effective IQA system and, as such, helps HEIs to understand the link between IQA and EQA	How does the Agency assess the quality of the policies and procedures developed by the institution under evaluation?	Explain the role of IQA within the Agency's criteria and standards. • The HEI describes and analyses its IQA mechanisms, which are aligned with the institution's vision and mission.
It helps HEIs to develop and consolidate a culture of institutional quality, establishing mechanisms for the continuous improvement of quality.	How does the Quality Agency contribute to strengthening the internal quality assurance mechanisms of the institutions it evaluates?	Present monitoring mechanisms and, where possible, results to document the impact of the Agency's methodology on the external evaluation process (for example, reporting on the implementation of recommendations).
It assists HEIs in providing independent evidence to their stakeholders, the public and the international community, demonstrating that they are delivering high-quality higher education.	How does it ensure that its evaluations serve to improve the performance of the HEI being evaluated?	Outlined follow-up strategies

Part B: Independence of Evaluation

Standard 4. EQA must be carried out by panels of external experts drawing on a wide range of knowledge and experience.

Standard	Key points: guiding questions	Examples of good practice – evidence
Experts: - Possessing the appropriate skills and competence to carry out their duties, and are carefully selected. - They must be properly briefed on the principles and procedures of EQA. - They are independent in their judgement regarding the quality of the programme or the HEI. - They have no conflict of interest with the HEI or the course under assessment. - They sign a declaration of independence and a declaration of no conflict of interest. • HEIs have the opportunity to state that they have no objections to the proposed experts.	What criteria have been developed for the composition of the panels? • Is the composition of the teams sufficiently diverse? Does it include academic peers, professionals from the socio-economic sector, students and other relevant members? • What criteria has the agency developed to form the basis for the selection of experts? • What measures does the QAA take to ensure the transparency and independence of judgements through its involvement and practice?	• Procedural manuals for the selection and management of experts. • Selection criteria. • Statistics on the diversity of experts' profiles: academics, researchers, professionals, quality assurance specialists, students, gender, age and geographical origin. • Documentation on the training of experts. • Signed declarations of no conflict of interest. • Indication of the opportunity granted to the higher education institution to issue a statement of no objection regarding the nominated experts.

Part C: Legal status

Standard 1. The agency must be an autonomous legal entity with a clearly defined mandate, scope and remit. It shall be recognised as a QAA at national/regional level.

Standard	Key points: guiding questions	Examples of good practice – evidence
• Quality assurance and evaluation is established by a competent authority.	• Comment on the legal status of your QAA, i.e. whether it is established by law, decree or any other means.	• Appropriate legal instrument, such as a law or decree establishing the QAA. • Statutes defining the mandate, scope and powers of the QAA.
• Where external quality assurance (EQA) serves regulatory purposes, there must be a guarantee that the results of the process are accepted within the higher education system, by stakeholders and by the public.	• Do you consider your QAA to be recognised in your country and region? Explain why.	• QAA activity reports validated and forwarded to senior management

Part C: Vision and Mission Statement

Standard 2. The QAA should have a written vision and mission statement or a set of objectives that take account of the context of higher education.

Standard	Key points: guiding questions	Examples of good practice – evidence
The vision, mission and objectives demonstrate that: - Quality Assurance is a core activity of the agency. - There is a systematic approach to achieving the vision, mission and objectives of Quality Assurance. - The objectives are implemented in accordance with a practical management plan, linked to the agency's resources.	• Comment on your QAA's vision and mission. • What activities are currently underway to achieve the QAA's vision, mission and strategic objectives?	The QAA has a published vision, mission and objectives, which are clearly communicated to stakeholders and the public. The QAA has a strategic plan, annual plans and annual reports, in line with the activities it carries out in relation to its remit.

How the user guide can help QAAs

- Support for self-assessment and continuous improvement.
- Providing examples of good practice and evidence.
- Specific guidance on the development of external quality assurance systems
- Definition of common minimum standards (comparability, consistency and flexibility).
- Promotion of mutual recognition and accreditation (transparency, regional alignment and the recognition of qualifications).

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A question for reflection

- To what extent could the ASG-QA user guide be useful for improving current quality assurance and evaluation practices in your country?

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