Public consultations for the revision of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

In order to contribute to the public consultation on the proposed draft of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, please access the feedback survey here.

The survey will be open until 9 January 2026.

The full text of the draft ESG 2027 is available here.

1. Introduction and context

The Tirana Ministerial Communiqué acknowledges that the application of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) "promotes trust and transparency within and between higher education systems and facilitates accountability and enhancement". Considering that the last version of the document was approved through the Yerevan Communiqué in 2015[1], and in order "to keep them in line with ongoing developments, challenges and expectations" **the ministers gave mandate to the authors[2] of the ESG to revise the document** ahead of the next Ministerial conference. The authors have been tasked with presenting a revision proposal by 2026, with the final version of the ESG to be adopted at the 2027 Ministerial conference.

Between 2022 and 2024, an **extensive stakeholder consultation** – involving ministries, students, higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies - was carried out within the QA-FIT project, financed by the ERASMUS+ Programme (call ERASMUS-EDU-2021-EHEA-IBA). Key outcomes of the project, including the outcomes of stakeholder consultations, are available here. All stakeholders agreed on the need for a revision, but **building on the existing version.**

2. Structures for the ESG revision

The structures for the ESG revision continue the approach used for the 2012-15 revision process, which was largely considered fit-for-purpose.

The revision is coordinated by a **Steering Committee (SC)**. The Steering Committee is composed of one representative from each of the seven primary and cooperating authors. Members of the Steering Committee are authorised to act in the name of their nominating organisation and have appropriate experience of quality assurance in the EHEA. The ENQA Director serves as Secretary to the Committee, with responsibility for organising meetings, taking minutes and coordinating follow-up as needed.

[1] https://ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/72/7/European_Standards_and_Guidelines_for_Quality_Assurance_in_the_EHEA_2015_MC_613727.pdf

[2] The primary authors are ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group, in cooperation with Business Europe, EI and EQAR.

The actual writing of the new ESG is done by a smaller **Drafting Group (DG)**. The Drafting Group is composed of one expert nominated by each of the E4[3] organisations, and the Group answers directly to the Steering Committee.

3. Timeline

The timeline of the revision process is presented in **Annex 1**. The work of the SC and DG started in September 2024, and the new version will be approved at the Ministerial Conference in May 2027.

The public consultation is taking place between **17 November 2025** and **9 January 2026**.

4. Main changes

The revision process was based on the following general principles:

- The current structure is appropriate (introductory section, 3 parts),
- Caution against overloading the ESG with too many topics, since it would risk diminishing its strength,
- The ESG should focus on learning, teaching (and assessment), but with much stronger reference to links with research and the societal mission,
- ESG are standards for quality assurance and not for quality itself (with few exceptions), and should support different concepts of quality,
- It needs to be ensured that the standards are self-explanatory, while the guidelines support implementation in different contexts instead of explaining concepts mentioned in the standards,
- The ESG should maintain applicability to all types of higher education provision (including "other/alternative providers" and smaller units of learning e.g. micro-credentials).

General Considerations and Context, Scope, Purposes and Principles

The introductory part was restructured, to avoid overlaps and to address in a logical order the concepts of quality, quality assurance, as well as the ESG's focus, scope, purpose and principles.

The context was updated so that it reflects the changes in the higher education systems in the last ten years, while the need to foster the social dimension and the fundamental values of higher education was underlined, as part of quality education. While the focus of the ESG remains on learning and teaching, societal engagement was added to the areas that should be considered when linked to learning and teaching, in addition to research. Other areas underpinning learning and teaching are governance and organisation of higher education. Part I

Detailed explanations about all changes in Part I are provided in **Annex 2**, and the main changes are as follows:

1.1 POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Require the internal quality assurance policy to reflect links between learning and teaching and other institutional missions and activities.
- Explicit reference to the involvement of students and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of the policy.

[3] ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE.

- Reference to the social dimension and fundamental values of higher education in the guidelines.

1.2 DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES

- Standard merged with standard 1.9.
- Societal relevance/employability is added to the standard
- Emphasise involvement of stakeholders, including students, in programme design/monitoring.
- Emphasise the importance of learning outcomes methodology.

1.3 STUDENT CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

- Updated understanding of student-centred learning and focus on the role of QA in supporting this.
- Strengthening the reference, primarily in the guidelines, to students' active role, quality assurance perspective and inclusivity.

1.4 STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION

- Guidelines now include a specific reference to the diploma supplement.

1.5 TEACHING STAFF

- Updated understanding of the role of the teacher.
- Expansion of the standard to cover other staff involved in education delivery, not only teaching staff.

1.6 LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

- Renamed to Learning environment.
- Expanded to cover the whole learning environment – learning resources, infrastructure and student support.
- Added reference to accessibility and inclusiveness.

1.7 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- Guidelines now include reference to collecting data on student satisfaction.

1.8 PUBLIC INFORMATION

1.9 ON-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

- Merged with 1.2 (with removal of overlaps).

1.10 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Part II

Detailed explanations about all changes in Part II are provided in **Annex 2**, and the main changes are as follows:

2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The focus on learning and teaching of the internal quality assurance processes in general is underlined, and also the need to verify that the considered education provision is higher education and developed in line with requirements specific to the declared level of qualification offered.
- The need to consider all standards described in Part I of the ESG was moved from the guidelines to the standard.

2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

- Underline the need to consider both accountability and enhancement, as well as relevant applicable regulations; and that the involvement of stakeholders is needed at all stages.

2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

- The need to have consistency between the processes and the methodologies for which they are set is underlined, also concerning adaptation to the established aims.
- It is clarified that a site visit normally takes place in person (unless otherwise justified), it is realised by the peer-review experts and includes interviews with different types of stakeholders (moved from guidelines).
- As a result of the external quality assurance processes, the report is developed by the experts (moved from the guidelines).

2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

- The requirement for the experts to be competent and independent, and that their selection should be adapted to the specific quality assurance process, was moved from the guidelines to the standard.

2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

- Change the name of the standard to cover also the processes to reach the outcomes.
- Reference to the evidence base for decision-making is strengthened (link between criteria, evidence in reports, outcomes of the procedure, and decision-making processes to reach the outcomes).
- While standard 3.2 on Official status of quality assurance agencies was deleted, the need to transparently communicate how and if the outcomes of the process are formally recognised was moved to this standard.

2.6 REPORTING

- The standard was expanded with the need to publish all documents used to reach the outcome of the review, in addition to the reports by the experts, if the case.
- Reinforce, as part of the standard, the usability of the reports by the institutions, including recommendations, as well as the need to provide the opportunity to institutions to fact-check the reports (moved from guidelines).
- The need for digital accessibility and usability of reports was included.

2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

- The need for appeals to be considered by a different entity than the one that took the decision was added to the standard.
- Further clarify though the guidelines the difference between complaints (process) and appeals (related to outcomes).

Part III

Detailed explanations about all changes in Part III are provided in **Annex 2**, and the main changes are as follows:

3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

- It is emphasised that involvement of stakeholders in the work and governance should be meaningful, while the students are now explicitly mentioned as one of the stakeholders to be involved.

3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS

- To be deleted, but the need for transparent information on how the outcomes of the reviews can be used and by whom they are recognised was included in ESG Part II (2.5).

3.3 INDEPENDENCE

- It is clarified that the agencies have to act without undue influence from any single internal or external party, and that safeguards should be in place to prevent this.
- Standard includes the three dimensions of independence - organisational, operational, and formal outcomes - which are currently in the guidelines.

3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

- Standard is renamed to “Activities for enhancement” and broadened to cover enhancement activities more generally.

3.5 RESOURCES

- Stronger emphasis on human resources, including the added requirement to ensure continuous professional development of the staff.

NEW PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND INTEGRITY

- Reference to the need for having and maintaining high professional standards and tools for ensuring integrity in order to facilitate trust.

3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- Requirement for the existence and application of an internal QA policy is added to the standard.
- Professional conduct (including in cross-border QA) moved into a separate standard.

3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

- Requirement for development since the previous review was added.

Annex 1 – Timeline of the revision process

Date	Meeting/actors	Action
2024		
September – December 2024	SC and DG meetings	Agree roadmap and structure, scope and principles Discuss draft introduction, main directions for the standards
2025		
24-25 February 2025	BFUG meeting in Poland	Discuss key issues for the ESG revision
March – November 2025	SC and DG meetings	Discuss draft introduction and Part 1, Part2 and Part 3
4 November	BFUG Board meeting in Vaduz	Update on ESG Draft 1
17 November		Launch public consultation
15-16 December	BFUG meeting in Denmark	Discuss overall ESG Draft 1
2026		
9 January 2026		Close public consultation
January - March 2026	SC and DG meetings	Discuss outcomes of consultation and ESG Draft 2
9-10 March 2026	BFUG meeting in Cyprus	Discuss ESG Draft 2 standard by standard
March – Autumn 2026	SC and DG meetings meeting	Discuss ESG final version
Autumn 2026	BFUG meeting in Ireland	BFUG approve the final version of the ESG 2027
2027		
26 – 27 May 2027	Ministerial Conference in Iași - Romania/Chișinău - Moldova	EHEA Ministers adopt the ESG 2027

Annex 2 – ESG 2027 explanation of proposed changes

ESG Part 1

ESG 2015	Revised version	Remarks
[ESG 1.1] Policy for Quality Assurance	**[ESG 1.1] Policy for Quality Assurance**	
Standard		
Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management.	Institutions should have a published policy for quality assurance of learning and teaching, with associated structures and procedures, which support a coherent system that forms an effective cycle of continuous improvement. The policy should be publicly available and be integrated in the strategic and operational management of the institution, ensuring thus links to the other institutional missions.	The standard was revised in order to refine its content and structure and clarify its relationship to other institutional missions, as well as with the operational management of the institution. It now expresses more clearly the idea that the policy has to be backed by structures and procedures forming a coherent system.
Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.	The development and implementation of the policy for quality assurance should include a structured, meaningful and visible role for students and all other internal and external stakeholders. The core outcomes of the QA processes and the measures taken should be shared with the stakeholders, including students.	The revision strengthens the role of stakeholders in internal quality assurance and specifically refers to transparency in terms of outcomes of the quality assurance processes.
Guidelines		
Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement		The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, the sentence was removed.

and contributes to the accountability of the institution.		
It supports the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. In order to facilitate this, the policy has a formal status and is publicly available.	An effective internal quality assurance system — encompassing planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and enhancement — supports the development of a quality culture. All internal stakeholders share responsibility for quality and actively engage in quality assurance and enhancement at all levels of the institution.	The changes were made to support the focus on continuous improvement (planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and enhancement). The new text also promotes the active involvement and responsibility of stakeholders in internal quality assurance.
Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research and learning & teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach.	Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research, learning, teaching and the societal mission of higher education.	The "societal dimension" was introduced to highlight the connection between quality assurance policies and other institutional missions in higher education. Moreover, changes were made with the understanding that each ESG standard already implicitly takes into account the national and institutional context.
Such a policy supports • the organisation of the quality assurance system; • departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units as well as those of institutional leadership, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance; • academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud; • guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff;	The quality assurance policy supports the institutional mission as well as academic and non-academic organisational units in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The quality assurance policy is aligned with other institutional policies, such as those supporting the social dimension of higher education and those safeguarding fundamental values, including • academic freedom • academic integrity • public responsibility of higher education.	A rephrasing and restructuring of the text was made to be more suitable for a guideline. The specific mentioning of the social dimension and fundamental values was added, in order to better ensure consistency with other EHEA policies.

● the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.		
The policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. How the policy is implemented, monitored and revised is the institution's decision.		
The QA policy also takes account of activities which are subcontracted to or carried out by other parties.	The quality assurance policy also covers activities that are subcontracted to or carried out by other parties.	The rephrasing was made for clarity.
[ESG 1.2] Design and approval of programmes	**[ESG 1.2] Design, approval, ongoing monitoring and periodic review[4] of programmes**	1.2 and 1.9 were merged to remove overlaps and ensure a more natural synergy/connection between standards.
Standard		
Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes, which ensure that programmes are coherent, informed by most up to date academic insights and reliable in leading to relevant competency profiles of programme's graduates.	Institutions should have processes for the design, approval, monitoring and periodic review of their programmes to ensure that they are coherent, informed by the latest academic and professional developments, and reliable in leading to the intended learning outcomes. These processes should ensure that programmes continue to achieve their objectives and respond to the needs of students, society and the labour market, supporting graduates' employability. These processes should involve relevant internal and external stakeholders, including students and graduates, and lead to continuous improvement of the provision.	Several parts of the standards were merged and moved into this paragraph for coherence and clarity. It was considered that stakeholder involvement (especially students and graduates) is at the level of importance which warrants inclusion in the standard rather than a guideline, i.e. it is an expectation from all higher education institutions, and not just an instance of good practice. The revised version also adds the dimension of programmes' relevance, as this is in line with the concept of quality as "fitness for purpose".

[4] This is not actually an addition, but a result of merging standards 1.2 and 1.9.

	The information collected during monitoring and periodic review of programmes is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.	
The programmes should be designed so that the students are enabled to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The structure of the programme should be based on the learning outcomes methodology.	The programmes should be designed based on the learning outcomes methodology.	The idea of achieving intended learning outcomes is mentioned above, therefore it was removed from here.
The qualification resulting from a programme should be specified and communicated. The qualification and learning outcomes correspond 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.	The qualification and learning outcomes correspond to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. The qualification resulting from a programme should be specified and communicated.	The order of the sentences switched, to improve coherence. The term “Framework for Qualifications” was revised to the term “Qualifications Framework of the EHEA (QF-EHEA)” used within the Bologna Process.
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.	.	The text was moved above, in the first paragraph of the standard.
Monitoring and review of programmes should involve relevant internal and external stakeholders.		The text was moved above, in the first paragraph of the standard.

Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.		The text was moved above, in the first paragraph of the standard.
Guidelines		
Study programmes are the core of the institutions teaching mission.		The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, the sentence was removed.
They provide students with both academic knowledge and skills including those that are transferable, which may influence their personal development and may be applied in their future careers.	Study programmes should be designed and delivered to enable students to acquire academic knowledge and skills, including those that are transferable, which may influence their personal development and may be applied in their future careers. The design and development of programmes are based on defined programme objectives and intended learning outcomes aligned with the institutional strategy and relevant external reference points, including national qualifications frameworks and professional or disciplinary standards. Students are equal partners in programme design, approval, monitoring and review. Other stakeholders — such as employers, professional bodies, graduates and external experts — are systematically and meaningfully involved to ensure relevance for society and the labour market.	The additions were made in order to: • explicitly link QA of programmes to national qualifications frameworks • strengthen stakeholder involvement, with a focus on students
Programmes ● are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the	Programmes • have clearly defined learning outcomes providing students with academic knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy;	

institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes; ● are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work; ● benefit from external expertise and reference points; ● reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (cf. Scope and Concepts); ● are designed so that they enable smooth student progression; ● define the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS; ● include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate; ● are subject to a formal institutional approval process.	• define the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS; • are informed by the latest research and benefit from external expertise and reference points; • include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate; • include research-based learning experiences; • are designed in line with the institutional strategy and have clearly defined learning outcomes in order to support recognition of qualifications and graduate employability; • are designed by involving students and other stakeholders; • are designed to support active participation of students in democratic societies; • foster students' lifelong personal development; • are regularly monitored and periodically reviewed.	The modifications to the initial text are meant to integrate stakeholder involvement, stress societal relevance, link programmes clearly to institutional strategy and external frameworks and modernise the learning-outcome language.
Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.		
They include the evaluation of:	Regular monitoring may include the evaluation of:	The main modification is meant to clarify that the evaluation is based on whether the programme responds to the changing needs of

● The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date; ● The changing needs of society; ● The students' workload, progression and completion; ● The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students; ● The student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme; ● The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.	● the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date; ● whether the programme responds to the changing needs of society and the labour market; ● the students' workload progression and completion; ● the effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of students; ● the student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme; ● the learning environment and its fitness for purpose for the programme.	society (plus the addition of the labour market), not monitoring the needs themselves. This is also to align it with the parts that were moved to the standard as mandatory requirements.
Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published.		Moved to the standard.
[ESG 1.3] Student-Centred-Learning, Teaching and Assessment	**[ESG 1.3] Student-Centred-Learning, Teaching and Assessment**	
Standard		
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.	Institutions should ensure that the programmes are designed and delivered in a way that fosters an active role of students in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach. Learning and teaching	It was considered important that students need to be prepared for this active role, and that it is institutional responsibility to facilitate it.

	processes should support students for such an active role.	
Guidelines		
Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.	When designing study programmes institutions consider how to stimulate students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process.	The reformulation was made for clarity and for avoiding redundancy.
The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching ● respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths; ● considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate; ● flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods; ● regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods; ● encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher; ● promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship; ● has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.	Quality assurance processes for student-centred learning and teaching ● ensure that institutional approaches to learning and teaching respect and address the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths and supporting lifelong learning; ● verify that a variety of pedagogical methods and modes of delivery are considered and used, including the effective use of digital and technological tools to support learning outcomes; ● verify that learning and teaching practices encourage student autonomy, while ensuring appropriate guidance and support from teaching staff; ● promote a culture of mutual respect within the learner–teacher relationship and ensure that this is reflected in institutional policies and feedback mechanisms;	The new formulations change the perspective from describing student-centred learning and teaching itself to how quality assurance processes should approach student-centred learning and teaching, whilst the main ideas are kept.

	• ensure that institutions regularly evaluate and adjust their modes of delivery and pedagogical methods, based on evidence and feedback from students, staff, and other stakeholders.	
Considering the importance of assessment for the students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following: • Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field; • The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance; • The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process; • Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner; • The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances; • Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;	Quality assurance processes for students' assessment take into account that: • assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field; • the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process; • where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner; • assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures; • the criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance; • the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances; • a formal procedure for student complaints and appeals is in place. The procedures are visible, accessible, and include regular	The new formulation places a stronger emphasis on transparency within quality assurance processes for students' assessment. The main ideas stays the same, but the new wording highlights transparency and accessibility of procedures, clarity of criteria and publication of follow-up and outcomes.

• A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.	publication of anonymised outcomes and actions taken.	
[ESG 1.4] Student Admission, Progression, Recognition, and Certification	**[ESG 1.4] Student Admission, Progression, Recognition, and Certification**	
Standard		
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.	Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle": student admission, progression, recognition and certification.	No change.
Guidelines		
Providing conditions and support that are necessary for students to make progress in their academic career is in the best interest of the individual students, programmes, institutions and systems. It is vital to have fit-for-purpose admission, recognition and completion procedures, particularly when students are mobile within and across higher education systems.		The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, the sentence was removed.
It is important that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. Induction to the institution and the programme is provided.	It is important that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently, fairly, and in a transparent manner. Induction to the institution and the programme is provided.	"Fairly" was added since fairness of the process and criteria is as important as consistency and transparency.
Institutions need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression.	Institutions need to put in place processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression.	No change.
Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning,	Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study, work placements, and prior	Adjustments were made for improving the coherence and clarity of the text.

including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on • institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention; • cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.	learning, including non-formal and informal learning, is essential for ensuring students' progress in their studies, and for promoting mobility. Appropriate recognition procedures rely on: • institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention; • cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the system.	
Graduation represents the culmination of the students' period of study. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.	Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed. This information could be included in the diploma supplement or other relevant documents.	The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, the sentence was removed. The guideline was split into two sentences and completed with the idea of achieving learning outcomes, as well as to explicitly refer to the Diploma Supplement as a tool of the Bologna Process.
[ESG 1.5] Teaching Staff	**[ESG 1.5] Teaching Staff**	
Standard		
Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their academic staff.	Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teaching and other staff involved in education delivery.	The reference of this standard was extended beyond the academic staff because diverse profiles of staff are involved in supporting the learning and teaching process and facilitating student success.
They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.	They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment, development and evaluation of the staff.	Staff evaluation was included and the alignment with the institution's mission and objectives, and the role of the teacher is emphasised.

	These processes should reflect the institutional mission, its programmes, and the objectives set for them, as well as the evolving role of teaching staff.	
Guidelines		
The teacher's role is essential in creating a high quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing.		The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, the part was removed.
Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their staff and for providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively.	Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their staff and for providing them with appropriate support, development opportunities, and regular review of teaching practice to carry out their work effectively. Incorporating student feedback into teacher evaluation can provide valuable insights into teaching effectiveness and areas for professional development.	Adding "development opportunities and regular review" makes institutions' responsibilities explicit: institutions systematically review, support and develop staff competences. The new formulation emphasises that student feedback can be used as a valuable source of information, also in terms of professional development of teaching staff, besides assessing teaching practices.
Such an environment ● sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognise and value the importance of teaching; ● offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff; ● encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education research;	A supportive environment: ● provides conditions of employment that recognise and value the importance of teaching; ● encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research and the societal mission of higher education; ● encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.	The changes are made to avoid overlaps with previous text ("Sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes…" was removed because recruitment transparency is already implied in the previous section). The phrase "and the societal mission of higher education" was added for acknowledging higher education's broader purpose.

● encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.		
[ESG 1.6] Learning Resources and Student Support	**1.6 Learning environment**	The title of the standard was revised in order to capture the totality of the systems that support the learning and teaching process.
Standard		
Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.	Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources, student support and infrastructure are provided.	"Infrastructure" was added as it is a key element of any learning environment.
Guidelines		
For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries, study facilities and IT infrastructure to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.	Institutions take into account the needs of a diverse student population and the principles of student-centred learning when allocating, planning and providing learning resources, student support and infrastructure. Resources to assist student learning might vary from course materials and libraries to data bases, dedicated software and simulation facilities. Human support is crucial, and besides teaching staff, such support could be provided by technical and/or administrative staff, tutors and counsellors. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.	The institutions' responsibility for designing and planning services in consideration of the diverse student body and student-centred learning is underlined. The resources enumeration was completed to reflect the current developments in information technologies and digitalisation. The reference to human support was expanded, to reflect the diverse types and roles of staff involved.
The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken		Incorporated in the text above.

into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.		
Support activities and facilities may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.	Students are informed about the resources and services available to them, and are consulted in their planning and evaluation to ensure they are fit for purpose.	The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, the first sentence was removed. The text was reformulated to avoid redundancy, but to maintain the main ideas of informing students the resources and services available and consulting them to ensure fitness for purpose.
In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.		The same ideas are already included in previous parts of this document; therefore, the sentence was deleted.
[ESG 1.7.] Information Management	**[ESG 1.7.] Information Management**	
Standard		
Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.	Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant and reliable information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.	The term "reliable" was moved from the guidelines to the standards. This addition emphasises that management depends not only on collecting data, but on trustworthy and verifiable data that can genuinely inform decision-making.
Guidelines		
Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making and for knowing what is working well and what needs attention. Effective processes to collect and analyse information about study programmes and other activities feed into the internal quality assurance system.	Effective processes to collect and analyse information on learning and teaching activities feed into the internal quality assurance system and support evidence-based decision-making. Institutions collect data periodically on the level of satisfaction of students regarding the support services.	The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, the two initial sentences were merged into a single sentence. The added sentence reflects the view that student feedback and satisfaction surveys are crucial elements of internal quality assurance.

The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the institution. The following are of interest: ● Key performance indicators; ● Profile of the student population; ● Student progression, success and drop-out rates; ● Students' satisfaction with their programmes; ● Learning resources and student support available; ● Career paths of graduates.	The information gathered, depending, to some extent, on the type and mission of the institution, includes relevant data for the student life-cycle and staff development, such as profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates, students' satisfaction with their programmes, including support services and resources, career paths of graduates, student and staff mobility rates.	The idea of "student and staff mobility rates" was added to emphasise that mobility is a key Bologna Process commitment Student support services and resources are also added, to link standard 1.7 with standard 1.6.
Various methods of collecting information may be used. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.	It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.	The first sentence was cut to avoid unnecessary text, as it is intuitive that various methods of collecting information may be used.
[ESG 1.8] Public Information	**[ESG 1.8] Public Information**	
Standard		
Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.	Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes and the outcomes of quality assurance processes. Information provided should be clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible for different target groups.	The standard was revised to include publication of quality assurance processes outcomes, therefore strengthening transparency.
Guidelines		

Information on institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public.		The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, this part was removed.
Therefore, institutions provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer and the selection criteria for them, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information.	More specifically, institutions provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer and the selection criteria for them, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information.	Revised for coherence.
[ESG 1.10] Cyclical External Quality Assurance	**[ESG 1.9] Cyclical External Quality Assurance**	
Standard		
Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.	Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.	No change.
Guidelines		
External quality assurance in its various forms can verify the effectiveness of institutions' internal quality assurance, act as a catalyst for improvement and offer the institution new perspectives. It will also provide information to assure the institution and the public of the quality of the institution's activities.		The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, this part was removed.
Institutions participate in cyclical external quality assurance that takes account, where relevant, of the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate. Therefore, depending on the framework, this external quality assurance may take different forms and focus at different	Institutions participate in cyclical external quality assurance that takes account of the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate. Therefore, depending on the framework, external	Modifications made to avoid redundancy.

organisational levels (such as programme, faculty or institution).	quality assurance may take different forms and focus on different organisational levels.	
Quality assurance is a continuous 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.	Institutions ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.	The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, this part was simplified.

ESG Part 2

ESG 2015	**Revised version**	**Remarks**
[ESG 2.1] Consideration of internal quality assurance	**[ESG 2.1] Addressing internal quality assurance**	Consideration was changed to addressing to better describe the content of the standard.
Standard		
External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.	External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes for learning and teaching, while assuring themselves that the education provision is at the correct level of higher education. All standards of Part 1 of the ESG should be covered by external quality assurance.	The focus on learning and teaching of the internal quality assurance processes in general is underlined, and also the need to verify that the considered education provision is higher education and developed in line with requirements specific to the declared level of qualification offered. The need to consider all standards described in Part I of the ESG, by external quality assurance as a whole, was moved from the guidelines.
Guidelines		
Quality assurance in higher education is based on the institutions' responsibility for the quality of their programmes and other provision; therefore it is important that external quality assurance		The first part was deleted as it was a justification of the need to have this standard; and the last paragraph was moved below.

recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance.		
To ensure the link between internal and external quality assurance, external quality assurance includes consideration of the standards of Part 1. These may be addressed differently, depending on the type of external quality assurance.	Depending on the type of external quality assurance, the standards included in Part 1 may be addressed differently.	This paragraph was moved to the standard. The paragraph was rephrased to add more clarity.
	It is important that external quality assurance recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance.	Moved from the first guideline.
[ESG 2.2] Designing methodologies fit for purpose	**[ESG 2.2] Designing methodologies fit for purpose**	
Standard		
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.	External quality assurance should be defined and designed to ensure that it achieves the aims and objectives set for it, including its dual purpose of accountability and enhancement in higher education. The design of methodologies should take into consideration relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in the design and continuous improvement of external quality assurance.	The standard was completed to underline one of the principles of the ESG: the need to consider both accountability and enhancement. Moreover, the fact that external quality assurance has to comply with the national legislation was included in the standard.
Guidelines		

In order to ensure effectiveness and objectivity it is vital for external quality assurance to have clear aims agreed by stakeholders.		The paragraph was deleted as overlaps with the standard.
The aims, objectives and implementation of the processes will: - bear in mind the level of workload and cost that they will place on institutions; - take into account the need to support institutions to improve quality; - allow institutions to demonstrate this improvement; - result in clear information on the outcomes and the follow-up.	The processes are designed so that they will: - bear in mind the level of workload and cost that they will place on institutions; - take into account the need to support institutions to improve quality; - allow institutions to demonstrate this improvement; - result in clear information on the outcomes and the follow-up.	The introduction was slightly reformulated, and no other change.
The system for external quality assurance might operate in a more flexible way if institutions are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance.	The system for external quality assurance might operate in a more flexible way if institutions are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance.	No change.
[ESG 2.3] Implementing processes	**[ESG 2.3] Implementing processes**	
Standard		
External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published.	External quality assurance processes should be pre-defined, published and implemented consistently, adapted to the methodology designed as described in standard 2.2. Processes should support the aims set for them.	The words *reliable* and *useful* were deleted as considered too general. The need to have consistency between the processes and the methodologies for which they are set is underlined, also concerning adaptation to the established aims.
They include - a self-assessment or equivalent; - an external assessment normally including a site visit; - a report resulting from the external assessment; - a consistent follow-up.	The processes include the following specific activities - a self-assessment or equivalent; - an external assessment normally including an in-person site visit by peer review experts,	It is clarified that a site visit normally takes place in person, it is realised by the peer-review experts and includes interviews with different types of stakeholders (moved from guidelines) as collecting input and perspectives of different stakeholders is crucial for gaining proper insight into the work of the agency.

	complemented with stakeholder interviews, ensuring input from various perspectives; - a report resulting from the external assessment by peer review experts; - a consistent follow-up.	In line with a peer- review methodology, it is clarified that the report resulting from the external review is the report developed by the experts (moved from the guidelines).
Guidelines		
External quality assurance carried out professionally, consistently and transparently ensures its acceptance and impact.		Deleted, as it is a justification for the need to have this standard.
Depending on the design of the external quality assurance system, the institution provides the basis for the external quality assurance through a self-assessment or by collecting other material including supporting evidence. The written documentation is normally complemented by interviews with stakeholders during a site visit. The findings of the assessment are summarised in a report (cf. Standard 2.5) written by a group of external experts (cf. Standard 2.4).		Deleted, as the aspects covered were already in the standard or were moved to the standard through the new formulation. The referral to other standards was deleted as considered not needed.
External quality assurance does not end with the report by the experts. The report provides clear guidance for institutional action. Agencies have a consistent follow-up process for considering the action taken by the institution. The nature of the follow-up will depend on the design of the external quality assurance.		The first paragraph was deleted, as the need to have a follow-up process is included in the standard, while aspects related to reports are described in the standard 2.4.

	The nature of the specific activities within the process depends on the aims and design of external quality assurance.	The need to have processes adapted to the aims and design of external quality assurance was extended to all specific activities.
[ESG 2.4] Peer-review experts	**[ESG 2.4] Peer-review experts**	
Standard		
External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).	External quality assurance should be carried out by competent and independent peer- review experts that include (a) student member(s). The selection of experts takes into consideration the aims and objectives of the process.	In the standard, the requirement was added for the experts to be competent and independent (moved from guidelines) in order to provide a more explicit basis for the quality of the review process. The need for their selection to be adapted to the specific quality assurance process was moved from guidelines, as it is considered crucial in order to assure that the experts are competent.
Guidelines		
At the core of external quality assurance is the wide range of expertise provided by peer experts, who contribute to the work of the agency through input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students and employers/professional practitioners.	The peer - review experts contribute to the work of the agency through input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students and employers/professional practitioners.	The first part of the paragraph was deleted, as it was repetitive.
In order to ensure the value and consistency of the work of the experts, they ● are carefully selected; ● have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task; ● are supported by appropriate training and/or briefing.	In order to ensure the value and consistency of the work of the experts, they have adequate skills to perform their task and are supported by appropriate training and/or briefing.	The first bullet point was deleted as it was moved to the standard.
The agency ensures the independence of the experts by implementing a mechanism of no-conflict-of-interest.	The agency implements a mechanism of no-conflict-of-interest.	The requirement for independence of experts was moved to the standard.

The involvement of international experts in external quality assurance, for example as members of peer panels, is desirable as it adds a further dimension to the development and implementation of processes.	The involvement of international peer - review experts in external quality assurance is desirable as it adds a further dimension to the development and implementation of processes.	The reference to being members in panels was deleted, as international experts can be involved in different ways.
[ESG 2.5] Criteria for outcomes	**[ESG 2.5] Processes** **and criteria for outcomes**	The standard tackles not only the criteria, but also the process to reach the outcomes, so the name of the standard was changed accordingly.
Standard		
Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.	Any outcomes, including formal decisions, made as a result of external quality assurance, should be based on evidence collected and analysed through the review process, and on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently. The agency provides transparent information about the formal recognition of outcomes of its external quality assurance processes.	The need to base decisions on evidence collected through the review process was added to the standard. While standard 3.2 on Official status of quality assurance agencies was deleted, the need to transparently communicate how and if the outcomes of the process are formally recognised was added here.
Guidelines		
External quality assurance and in particular its outcomes have a significant impact on institutions and programmes that are evaluated and judged.		Deleted, as it is an explanation.
In the interests of equity and reliability, outcomes of external quality assurance are based on pre-defined and published criteria, which are interpreted consistently and are evidence-based.		Deleted and included in the standard.
Depending on the external quality assurance system, outcomes may take different forms, for example, recommendations, judgements or formal decisions.	Depending on the external quality assurance system, outcomes may take different forms, for example, recommendations, judgements or formal decisions.	No change

[ESG 2.6] Reporting	**[ESG 2.6] Reporting**	
Standard		
Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.	All full reports by the peer - review experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners, and other interested individuals. Any other evidence and documents used in the decision-making should be published with the report written by the peer - review experts. The reports should be useful for the evaluated institution and provide recommendations for improvement. The evaluated institution should be given an opportunity to check the factual accuracy of the report before it is finalised.	The standard was completed with the need to publish all documents used to reach the outcome of the review, in addition to the reports by the experts, if the case. Also, the standard refers to usefulness of reports and the need to give to the institutions the opportunity to fact-check them (moved from guidelines).
Guidelines		
The report by the experts is the basis for the institution's follow-up action of the external evaluation and it provides information to society regarding the activities of an institution.	The report by the experts is the basis for the institution's follow-up action. It also provides information to society regarding the activities of the evaluated institution.	Split in two sentences, for clarity.
In order for the report to be used as the basis for action to be taken, it needs to be clear and concise in its structure and language and to cover ● context description (to help locate the higher education institution in its specific context); ● description of the individual procedure, including experts involved; ● evidence, analysis and findings; ● conclusions;	To achieve this, the report needs to be clear and concise in its structure and language and to cover: ● context description (to help locate the higher education institution in its specific context); ● description of the individual procedure, including experts involved; ● evidence, analysis and findings; ● conclusions; ● features of good practice, demonstrated by the institution;	The introductory sentence was slightly simplified, for clarity.

• features of good practice, demonstrated by the institution; • recommendations for follow-up action.	• recommendations for follow-up action.	
	To increase the accessibility and usability of the reports, they may be made available in a searchable electronic format.	For increased accessibility, reports may be published in a searchable format.
The preparation of a summary report may be useful.	A summary of the report would increase its accessibility and transparency.	It is described why a summary of the report could be useful.
The factual accuracy of a report is improved if the institution is given the opportunity to point out errors of fact before the report is finalised.		Deleted, as it was moved to the standard.
[ESG 2.7.] Complaints and appeals	**[ESG 2.7.] Complaints and appeals**	
Standard		
Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.	Agencies should have complaints and appeals processes that are defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and clearly communicated to the institutions. Appeals should be considered by a different entity than the one whose decision is appealed against.	The first paragraph is slightly revised for clarity. The need for appeals to be considered by a different entity than the one that took the decision is added in order to strengthen the reliability and impartiality of the process.
Guidelines		
In order to safeguard the rights of the institutions and ensure fair decision-making, external quality assurance is operated in an open and accountable way. Nevertheless, there may be misapprehensions or instances of dissatisfaction about the process or formal outcomes.		Deleted, as it is a justification for the need to have this standard.

Institutions need to have access to processes that allow them to raise issues of concern with the agency; the agencies, need to handle such issues in a professional way by means of a clearly defined process that is consistently applied.	Agencies need to handle issues of concern related to the conduct of the process or those carrying it out in a professional way by means of a clearly defined complaints procedure that is consistently applied.	The paragraph is revised for clarity and it is explicitly added that such situation should be handled through a complaints procedure.
	Agencies may also have a policy for complaints from third parties.	The idea that a complaints procedure for third parties could be beneficial was added.
A complaints procedure allows an institution to state its dissatisfaction about the conduct of the process or those carrying it out.		Deleted, as overlaps with a paragraph from above.
In an appeals procedure, the institution questions the formal outcomes of the process, where it can demonstrate that the outcome is not based on sound evidence, that criteria have not been correctly applied or that the processes have not been consistently implemented.	Agencies have transparent processes in place to handle appeals within their own structures. In an appeals procedure, the institution questions the formal outcomes of the process, where it can demonstrate that the outcome is not based on sound evidence, or that criteria have not been correctly applied.	It is added that appeals should be handled within a transparent process established at the level of the agency.

ESG Part 3

ESG 2015	**Revised version**	**Remarks**
[ESG 3.1] Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance	**[ESG 3.1] Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance**	
Standard		
Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis.	Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis.	No changes.

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 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.	No changes.
Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.	Agencies should ensure the meaningful involvement of stakeholders, including students, in their governance and work.	Standard was slightly reworded to clarify the importance of the stakeholders not only being formally involved but also producing a meaningful impact on the governance and work. Students are emphasised in the revised version in order to explicate that they need to be included among stakeholders involved.
Guidelines		
To ensure the meaningfulness of external quality assurance, it is important that institutions and the public trust agencies. Therefore, the goals and objectives of the quality assurance activities are described and published along with the nature of interaction between the agencies and relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the scope of the agencies' work.	The goals and objectives of the different quality assurance activities and the scope of the agencies' work are described transparently and are published. This information also addresses the nature of interaction between the agencies and relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions.	This guideline still retains most of the original meaning but was reworded because the guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard.
The expertise in the agency may be increased by including international members in agency committees.	The expertise in the agency may be increased by including international members in agency structures.	No changes.

A variety of external quality assurance activities are carried out by agencies to achieve different objectives. Among them are evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities at programme or institutional level that may be carried out differently.		
When the agencies also carry out other activities, a clear distinction between external quality assurance and their other fields of work is needed.		This has been moved to the new standard 3.5.
~~[**ESG 3.2] Official status~~		
Standard		
~~Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.~~		Since the last revision of the ESG in 2015, it has been observed that there is a growing number of agencies that, although clearly providing trustworthy work (when they manage to demonstrate ESG compliance) often do not have an official status of a QA agency. However, (some of) their activities are recognised and used in a similar way to those agencies that hold this official status through regulatory frameworks, or they simply perform enhancement-focused external QA for which regulatory recognition is not required. Therefore, this standard was deleted, and in standard 2.5 an element regarding transparency of the use of outcomes of agency's procedures was added. This means that agencies would be required to clearly present to the public what the formal status of their external QA outcomes is.
Guidelines		

~~In particular when external quality assurance is carried out for regulatory purposes, institutions need to have the security that the outcomes of this process are accepted within their higher education system, by the state, the stakeholders and the public.~~		Same as above
[ESG 3.3] Independence	**[ESG 3.2] Independence**	
Standard		
Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.	Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without undue influence from any single party. The agency should have specific safeguards, checks and balances that ensure autonomy and independence so that no one stakeholder, entity, or individual has a dominant role over the agency. The key elements of independence of agencies include: 1) Organisational independence 2) Operational independence 3) Independence of formal outcomes	The standard was revised in order to emphasise that independence implies that no single party can unilaterally exert influence over the agency. I.e., independence is more clearly defined as autonomy from any dominant influence. Additionally, three dimensions of independence have been included in the standard.
Guidelines		
Autonomous institutions need independent agencies as counterparts. In considering the independence of an agency the following are important:		The guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard; therefore, the sentence was removed.
1) Organisational independence, demonstrated by official documentation (e.g. instruments of government, legislative acts or statutes of the organisation) that stipulates the	1) Organisational independence, demonstrated by official documentation (e.g. instruments of government, legislative acts or statutes of the organisation) that stipulates the independence of the agency's work from third parties, such	No changes.

independence of the agency's work from third parties, such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholder organisations;	as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholder organisations.	
2) Operational independence: the definition and operation of the agency's procedures and methods as well as the nomination and appointment of external experts are undertaken independently from third parties such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholders;	2) Operational independence: the definition and operation of the agency's procedures and methods as well as the nomination and appointment of peer review experts are undertaken independently from third parties such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholders.	No changes.
3) Independence of formal outcomes: while experts from relevant stakeholder backgrounds, particularly students, take part in quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.	3) Independence of formal outcomes: while experts from relevant stakeholder backgrounds take part in quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.	No changes except deletion of an expression focusing on students, since there is no particular concern related to assuring independence of outcomes in regard to the participation of students.
Anyone contributing to external quality assurance activities of an agency (e.g. as expert) is informed that while they may be nominated by a third party, they are acting in a personal capacity and not representing their constituent organisations when working for the agency. Independence is important to ensure that any procedures and decisions are solely based on expertise.	Anyone contributing to external quality assurance activities of an agency (e.g. as a peer-review expert) is informed that while they may be nominated by a third party, they are acting in a personal capacity and not representing their constituent organisations when working for the agency. Independence is important to ensure that any procedures and decisions are solely based on expertise and evidence.	No changes.
[ESG 3.4] Thematic analysis	**[ESG 3.3] Activities for enhancement**	The name of the standard was changed in order to better reflect its content.
Standard		

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.	Agencies should regularly engage in activities and publish results that support the enhancement of quality assurance and learning and teaching in the context in which they work.	The standard has been expanded in order to consider other types of agencies' contributions beyond the results of their external quality assurance activities .The underpinning for this proposal is the recognition that agencies often produce a variety of other contributions (e.g. thematic reports, statistics, trainings, events etc.) which support the development of the higher education system, but are often not directly nor exclusively linked to the results of the external quality assurance activities of the agency.
Guidelines		
In the course of their work, agencies gain information on programmes and institutions that can be useful beyond the scope of a single process, providing material for structured analyses across the higher education system. These findings can contribute to the reflection on and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in institutional, national and international contexts. A thorough and careful analysis of this information will show developments, trends and areas of good practice or persistent difficulty.	In the course of their work, agencies gain information on programmes and institutions that can be useful beyond the scope of a single process, providing material for structured analyses across the higher education system. These findings can contribute to the to the reflection on developments, trends and areas of good practice or persistent difficulties, and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in national and international contexts.	The second and third paragraph have been merged and slightly reworded, but the original meaning is largely retained.
[ESG 3.5] Resources	**[ESG 3.4] Resources**	
Standard		

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.	Agencies should have adequate resources to carry out their work professionally. These resources, both human and financial, should enable effective and sustainable implementation of the agency's activities. Agencies should provide professional development opportunities to ensure the high level of competencies of its staff.	The original part of the text is retained and has been expanded with considerations on effectiveness and sustainability in relation to the activities carried out by the agencies. Dimension of professionalism is added because continuous professional development and investment in human resources is crucial for successful operations of agencies.
Guidelines		
It is in the public interest that agencies are adequately and appropriately funded, given higher education's important impact on the development of societies and individuals. The resources of the agencies enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance activities in an effective and efficient manner. Furthermore, the resources enable the agencies to improve, to reflect on their practice and to inform the public about their activities.	The resources enable the agencies to reflect on their practice, to improve it when needed, and to inform the public about their activities. When managing resources, aspects of digital and sustainable transition may be taken into consideration.	The part of the text referring to public interest has been removed because the guidelines are intended to provide guidance and examples of good practice rather than explanations or justify the need for having the standard. The part of the text referring to "enabling the agencies to organise and run external QA activities in an effective and efficient manner" has been moved to the standard. Finally, "digital and sustainable transition" have been added to the guideline as an example of good practice that is in line with current priorities at the European level.
[ESG 3.6] Internal quality assurance and professional conduct	**[ESG 3.5] Professional conduct and integrity**	Standard 3.6 was split into two standards: Professional conduct and integrity and Internal quality assurance in order to better capture the professional conduct dimension, which was also expanded.
Standard		

Agencies need to be accountable to their stakeholders. Therefore, high professional standards and integrity in the agency's work are indispensable. The review and improvement of their activities are on-going so as to ensure that their services to institutions and society are optimal.	Agencies should have high professional standards to create trust in their work and credibility. Effective tools should be in place to ensure the integrity of their operations on national and international levels and to prevent conflicts of interest. When the agencies also carry out activities that are not in the scope of the ESG, a clear distinction between external quality assurance and other fields of work is needed. This needs to be clearly communicated to the wide public.	The text from standard 3.6 was slightly reformulated, describing why professionalism is important in the specific context of quality assurance. The new standard emphasises the integrity dimension of agency's operations both nationally and internationally, which is becoming increasing important as cross-border QA becomes more present in EHEA. To fulfil the imperative that organisations themselves convey trust, they need to act in a credible and fully ethical manner, preventing conflicts of interest. Transparency is conducive to facilitating trust and therefore it has to be clear to the public when only *some* of the agency's activities are complying with the ESG. Therefore, this was moved from guideline under ESG 3.1 to this standard.
Guidelines		
This policy • ensures that all persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically;	The agency ensures that all persons involved in its activities have adequate competencies and act professionally and ethically.	No significant changes in relation to current 3.6.
• guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination;	There are mechanisms in place that guard against intolerance of any kind or discrimination.	No significant changes in relation to current 3.6.
• outlines the appropriate communication with the relevant authorities of those jurisdictions where they operate; allows the agency to establish the status and recognition of the institutions with which it conducts external quality assurance.	When working abroad, the agency communicates appropriately with the relevant authorities of the jurisdiction in which it operates.	It has been made more explicit that it is a matter of good practice that the agency working abroad communicates with relevant authorities, to assure the fitness for purpose of the procedures.

[ESG 3.6] Internal quality assurance and professional conduct	**[ESG 3.6] Internal quality assurance**	The name of the standard was changed, since professional conduct is now addressed in the new standard 3.5.
Standard		
Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.	Agencies should have a published internal quality policy that defines the procedures and tools in use for continuous enhancement of their activities. The internal quality assurance system should assure and enhance the quality and integrity of the agencies' activities.	The standard has been revised in order to emphasise that the internal quality policy should be published for transparency, and what should be the (minimal) scope of this policy. Additionally, in the second paragraph it is now clarified that the implementation of such a policy should actually lead to quality assurance and enhancement of the agency's activities.
Guidelines		
Agencies apply an internal quality assurance policy which is available on its website.		
This policy • ensures that all persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically; • includes internal and external feedback mechanisms that lead to a continuous improvement within the agency;	Internal and external feedback is collected by the agency from its stakeholders which contributes to continuous improvement of its activities	Slight rewording for clarity, but no change in meaning.
• ensures that any activities carried out and material produced by subcontractors are in line with the ESG, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance activities are subcontracted to other parties;	Responsibility for the quality of any activities carried out by partners lies within the agency.	The guideline has been reworded for clarity but the meaning stays the same.
[ESG 3.7.] Cyclical external review of agencies	**[ESG 3.7.] Review of agencies**	
Standard		

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.	Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG, addressing, where relevant, the outcomes of the previous review.	The continuous enhancement dimension of external reviews is emphasised with the focus being placed on improvements made between the cycles.
Guidelines		
A periodic external review will help the agency to reflect on its policies and activities. It provides a means for assuring the agency and its stakeholders that it continues to adhere to the principles enshrined in the ESG.	The agency reflects on its policies and activities continuously. A periodic external review assures the agency and its stakeholders that it continues to adhere to the principles enshrined in the ESG.	Only slight rewording, but no substantive revision.