



# INQAAHE Strategic Plan

## 2018–2022

# FOREWORD

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Dear Colleagues,



I am delighted to present the new *INQAAHE Strategic Plan 2018-2022*, which outlines our strategic priorities, goals and specific objectives for the next five years. The plan targets to support global quality assurance (QA) community members in the fulfilment of their primary obligations and promotion of the quality cause at large.

The new Strategic Plan (SP) draws from an in-depth analysis of INQAAHE's activities and achievements over the period of 2013-2017 and has been formulated through extensive consultation with all our members.

The SP is organised around INQAAHE's four key strategic pillars and their concomitant goals for 2018-2022. Specific objectives are illustrated for each of the goals which will further be developed into discrete activities in the operational and yearly plans.

The strategic pillars represent the four broad areas in which INQAAHE will focus and capitalise on over the next five years. They evolve around creating a sustainable environment in which INQAAHE's operations can not only thrive, but can continue to invest in the future enhancement and development of quality provisions and quality cultures through an emphasis on building knowledge, supporting research, and promoting the relevance of our services. The strategic priorities are underpinned by the principle of diversity to cater to the diverse needs of our members, thus benefiting higher education QA systems worldwide.

The SP will be operationalised through annual operational plans, which will further elaborate on the identified specific needs to ensure the relevance of INQAAHE's offerings to its members. The ultimate aim is to enhance the benefits offered to our members within the financial resources available.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the various stages of the SP formulation: the INQAAHE Board and Secretariat, past Presidents, as well as INQAAHE members at large. Further, I call for the continued support of the entire INQAAHE community to make this plan a success, since it is only through our joint efforts that the ambitions of the new SP can become a reality.

It is our hope that the new SP advances INQAAHE to new heights by moving the higher education quality agenda forward and upward.

Susanna Karakhanyan  
President

**We strive to make INQAAHE a global enhancement platform for all QA providers**

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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The INQAAHE Board of Directors developed this Strategic Plan (SP) 2018-2022 to present the international quality assurance (QA) community with a five-year roadmap for support, services and organisation development.

The SP was developed by the INQAAHE Executive Committee, with the unstinting support of all the Board members. The Committee also sought feedback and guidance from past INQAAHE Presidents and valued members to ensure sustainability, coherence, continuity, and relevance to further operations of the Network.

In particular, the new SP draws from the 2017 *INQAAHE Impact Study*, which includes an in-depth review of feedback garnered from INQAAHE members over the last five years and the vast experience of the Network accumulated throughout the years of its existence. It was developed with broad involvement of INQAAHE members to ensure that the outlined strategies and goals serve the diverse needs of our valued members and other stakeholders at large. The environmental scan and organisational assessment has helped the Committee to assess both the challenges and opportunities INQAAHE is likely to face over the next five years and set the context for the directions reflected in this SP.

The SP was approved and adopted by the INQAAHE Board of Directors on 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2017 and will enter its full implementation on 1 January 2018. The Board of Directors will follow up on the implementation of the SP, report annually on the achievements and identified needs, and detail further implementation steps to ensure its continued relevance.

## II. INQAAHE PROFILE, HISTORY AND IMPACT

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INQAAHE is a quality assurance (QA) community, whose primary membership is drawn from QA organisations [external QA (EQA) bodies, internal QA (IQA) units of higher education institutions (HEI), and regional, subject-specific and other networks] with shared interests and values; speaking a common language, embracing the importance of good practices and having an in-depth understanding of how things are done in the specific field of QA in HE. It provides a trusted platform for the discussion of global issues in higher education in general and QA in particular; issues that go beyond national or regional boundaries. This unique platform that INQAAHE offers provides members with an opportunity to learn from what others are doing, both from their successes and failures, to explore potential solutions for their specific contexts, and thus sets a firm foundation for the development of the QA profession.

INQAAHE was established in 1991 with only eight members. Since its launch, INQAAHE was intended to be a body supportive and inclusive of all HE QA providers. Thus, it had no mandate nor desire to control or direct QA agencies, and the use of the term 'network' was deliberately chosen to stress collegial interaction and to signal the intent of the participating organisations to provide mutual support. Consistent with this intention, INQAAHE's founding members stated that their central aim was information-sharing between organisations, with other objectives listed as aspirational.

Historically speaking, the founders of INQAAHE set out to establish an organisation for QA agencies: that is, bodies responsible for reviewing the HEIs. However, over the years, INQAAHE has received an increasing number of requests for inclusion as members from other organisations working in QA in higher education, such as IQA units of HEIs, think tanks and other planning bodies. It seemed valuable to have their expertise included within INQAAHE, but in a way that did not detract from the primacy of EQAs. To meet this need, the concept of Associate Member for bodies other than EQAs was introduced and the distinction between the members continues to the present date. Further, for individuals interested in the cause of QA, a special category of affiliates was adopted to enable their participation in, and contribution to, the QA enhancement dialogue. INQAAHE also has strategic partners, which are the regional, subject-specific, thematic, and other networks that unite QA providers.









With about 300 members 21 strategic partners to date, throughout its 26 years of existence, INQAAHE has made major contributions to the promotion of international dialogue and cooperation in higher education QA by bridging different systems from all over the world thus enabling learning from a variety of cultures with diverse approaches to QA, which has served to enhance quality culture worldwide.

## Challenges ahead



The paradigmatic shift in higher education (HE) provisions and emergence of a diversity of providers has radically changed the profile of HE over the last few decades. Exponential growth in the use of information and communications technology, and the delivery of distance education, as well as technical and vocational education, have tremendously contributed to the differentiation of HE provision, thus making recognition of this diverse provision a priority for the developmental agendas of the organisations whose missions evolve around HE provision and its QA. Recognition of the qualifications and degrees offered has become more important as more higher education institutions (HEI) delivering programmes in different modes enter the market. These developments have thrust QA agencies into ever expanding roles, with the need to revise their approaches to meet the diversity of expectations.



To better understand where QA stands within the international HE landscape and how INQAAHE can best contribute to enhancing the quality of education provisions internationally, the INQAAHE Board initiated an in-depth exploration of the major system-wide needs in 2017 by taking stock of INQAAHE's successes and failures, learning from global trends and QA practices, and identifying trends, challenges and opportunities for further enhancement of its services.

In particular, the study looked at the impact of INQAAHE on its members across the following five categories:

-  Effectiveness of INQAAHE events
-  INQAAHE Projects:
  -  Research
  -  Capacity building
  -  QA Programme
-  Guidelines of Good Practice (GGP) and experience with alignment
-  Communication and outreach
-  Expectations of INQAAHE members

In addition to the *INQAAHE Impact Study (2017)*, due consideration was given to recent international developments in terms of the emergence of new QA providers, networks, overall challenges, and the need to better position INQAAHE in serving its members. Based on the results of the Impact Study and the data collected throughout the last five years of operations, as well as invaluable feedback from our members, the following areas were identified as being crucial when developing strategies to enhance and promote the QA cause:

-  **Sustainability:** refers both to the sustainability of INQAAHE operations and that of its activities aimed at enhancing QA systems worldwide
-  **Quality culture:** refers to further efforts to be invested to promote the establishment and enhancement of quality culture

-  **Research/Think tank:** refers to the contribution to the body of knowledge as promoted by the Network and its members
-  **Relevance:** refers both to the relevance of INQAAHE operations and that of its activities aimed at promoting relevance of QA approaches worldwide

Underpinning the strategic priorities is INQAAHE's approach in embracing the diversity of cultures and methodologies driving HE QA worldwide.

### III. MISSION, VALUES & BENEFITS


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The central purpose and role of INQAAHE as per the existing constitution is *to promote and advance excellence in HE through the support of an active international community of QA agencies*. In order to achieve this goal, the Network focuses on the development of the theory and practice of QA, the exchange and understanding of policies and actions of its members, and the promotion of QA for the benefit of HE, institutions, students and society at large.



While a diversity of regional, subject-specific, thematic and other QA networks have emerged in the last decade to close the gaps in specific niches, e.g. cross-border higher education (CBHE) and distance education, INQAAHE's mission to provide a unique enhancement platform by bridging different regions and diversity of quality cultures worldwide is crucial. This is to enable learning from each other and to ensure that challenges posed by the ever-changing environment are addressed in terms of relevance, credibility, and recognition of the outcomes and efficiency of QA provisions. The value of INQAAHE as the Global Network, whose ownership lies with QA providers globally keeps increasing in terms of its momentum as globalisation and internationalisation rule the developments in this area.

#### **The Key Values:**

Fundamental to the work of the Network are the **key values** that support the policies and practices of QA:



-  Recognition of the value of the collective wisdom gathered from the practices of a diverse set of members, and their ability to address the challenges of educational and social structures in which they operate.

INQAAHE celebrates this diversity, which has also made it possible to identify and highlight commonalities and fundamental principles that underpin good practices and guide the operations of QA agencies.








-  Belief in the primacy of academic freedom and institutional integrity, and a commitment to the idea that quality and QA are primarily the responsibility of HEIs themselves.
-  A fundamental understanding of the importance of working in partnership – among members, with HEIs, and regional, international government and non-government organisations as well as the business sector – in order to provide member support, guidance, information, and advocacy for QA.

#### **Direct Benefits:**




##### **HE Quality Assurance Providers (QA bodies and HEIs):**

-  Exposure to a vast diversity of QA approaches and cultures from a global perspective
-  Collaborative ties and networking opportunities with leading QA experts internationally








-  An opportunity to learn from and exchange best practice internationally to benefit national systems
-  Capacity building in QA to enhance the national level approaches to QA and promote the national agendas on QA
-  GGP alignment and promotion of recognition
-  Opportunities for research on a diversity of topics related to higher education, its QA, and its integrity
-  Benefiting from the accumulated body of knowledge on QA
-  Keeping up-to-date with international trends in QA
-  Promoting recognition of QA outcomes

#### **Regional networks and strategic partners:**





-  Opportunities to reach out to a vast diversity of QA providers and learn from their experience
-  Joint projects to promote the QA enhancement agenda
-  Credibility in HE provisions

#### **Indirect Benefits:**

##### **Faculty and Students:**

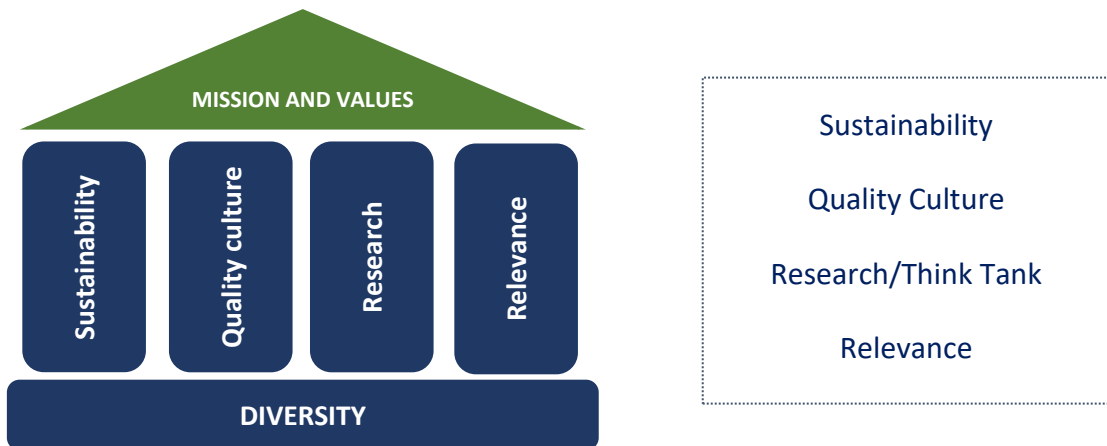
-  Credibility in qualifications offered
-  Credibility in HE providers
-  Enhanced leadership skills through involvement in QA activities and INQAAHE Quality Assurance Programme (QAP)
-  Engaged teaching for better learning outcomes
-  A strengthened student experience in HE

##### **Society at large:**

-  Improved quality of HE systems
-  Promotion of recognition of qualifications
-  Support for the national authorities in terms of promoting the QA agenda
-  Credibility in HE provisions

## INQAAHE Strategic Pillars

Based on feedback and comments from members via the 2017 *INQAAHE Impact Study*, there is a need to focus on the following four key areas when developing strategies that will further enhance and promote the QA cause. These four areas are called the INQAAHE Four Pillars:



Underpinning the four pillars is INQAAHE's approach to embracing the diversity of cultures and methodology in driving HE worldwide.

## IV. STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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The strategic goals of INQAAHE for 2018-2022 under the four pillars are as follows:

### **Pillar I: Sustainability**

Goal 1: To boost INQAAHE's role as a world leader in tertiary education quality assurance and an umbrella organisation for external and internal quality assurance providers

1.1 Ensuring worldwide visibility of INQAAHE's role as the leading organisation for external and internal QA providers as well as assuring independence and recognition of the INQAAHE members:

- 1.1.1 Expansion and maintenance of INQAAHE's global presence by reaching out to regions and areas that have been underserved (e.g. Africa, Central Asia). The INQAAHE Global Survey conducted by INQAAHE on a regular basis will provide updates on the regions in need of further attention.
- 1.1.2 Promotion and diffusion of the INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice (commonly referred to as GGP), which set out the professional practices that INQAAHE believes should be embedded in all QA agencies/units. The purpose of GGP is to promote good practices for internal and/or external QA providers, thus establishing and enhancing a quality culture.
- 1.1.3 Establishment and operationalisation of the Global Quality Assurance Register (commonly referred to as the GQAR). The purpose of the GQAR is to offer a platform for registering credible QA providers globally, which will serve as a transparent tool for the HE stakeholders at large and promote recognition of the QA outcomes.
- 1.1.4 Participation in major international QA events as well as organisation of events promoting INQAAHE's visibility and the application of such promotion and dissemination channels such as biennial conferences and fora; publication of journal, bulletins, communiques and papers, as well as documents generated by the conferences and those developed by the members.
- 1.1.5 Promotion of INQAAHE's activities, achievements, benefits, and values among members and global society at large through the use of social and professional online networks; increasing accessibility to INQAAHE's publications through the use of modern technology and media.



- 1.2 Promoting leadership development through continued commitment of members to the Network. INQAAHE considers professionalism of all its members to be crucial. Thus, INQAAHE will continue to promote broad involvement of its members in the activities undertaken by INQAAHE through identifying and inviting individuals with appropriate potential to take a stronger leadership role in matters related to the Network.

To effectively contribute to the Board's activities, further contribution will be made to ensure the professionalism and sustainability of the Board's operations and culture. This will include, but not be limited to, the introduction of a staggered approach to the Board formation and operationalisation, as well as a stronger emphasis in mentoring new Board members.

- 1.3 Ensuring operational and financial stability of INQAAHE to promote sustainable organisational growth.

- 1.3.1 Diversification of INQAAHE funding and revenue model to ensure sustainable operations and development, as well as enhanced capacity building opportunities for our members. As part of the aim, in-depth studies to explore potential new revenue channels for INQAAHE will be undertaken to determine the most viable ones.

- 1.3.2 Revision of INQAAHE's organisational structure to enable sustainable operations, while ensuring flexibility in operations and maintaining global ownership of INQAAHE by its diverse members.

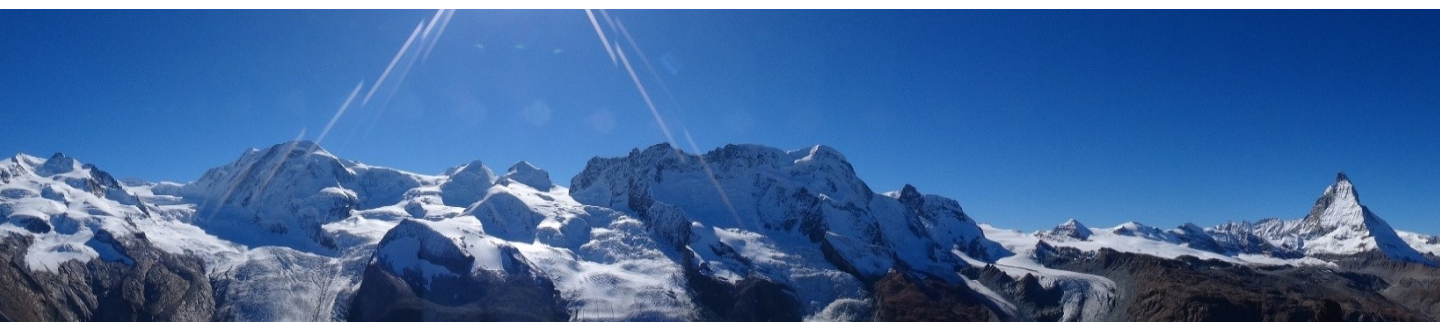
- 1.4 Enhancing collaboration with diverse QA networks (e.g. organised on the basis of regional interests, subject-specific and cultural issues, thematic/special interests, specific mode of education) to contribute to regional as well as international developments to champion QA-related agendas in the HE sector. One of the tools to promote the goal is the INQAAHE Global Survey of EQA and IQA initiated in 2017. This is planned to become a regular activity carried out at certain intervals with the involvement of regional QA networks, HE university associations, and other stakeholders. The Global Survey will provide a thorough study of the developments, trends and challenges in HE QA worldwide, culminating in a set of recommendations for each of the regions to follow. Another potential effort to promote the goal is through joint projects initiated with the QA providers/networks.



## Pillar II: Quality Culture

**Goal 2:** To provide a robust platform for experience exchange and collaboration between the regions worldwide by bridging global quality assurance providers

- 2.1 Biennial conferences and fora will remain major annual INQAAHE events that offer a platform for experience sharing, collaboration, networking, and learning from each other. Apart from conventional annual events, INQAAHE will reach out to different regions upon the request of its members to co-organise special events at the regional level for capacity building purposes and to support members' quality and quality enhancement initiatives.
- 2.2 Encouraging INQAAHE members' involvement through activities that lead to expansion of links between INQAAHE and other stakeholders. The Board will continue to encourage participation of INQAAHE members in different activities of the Network by inviting them to take part in working groups (WGs) organised to promote the different lines of INQAAHE's strategic priorities. Further, INQAAHE will encourage involvement of its members in the activities of other QA organisations and networks. Such additional networking opportunities will be explored and disseminated through the range of studies conducted by INQAAHE.
- 2.3 Promoting the establishment of quality culture by reaching out to regions that are underserved (e.g. Francophone Africa, Central Asia).
- 2.4 Professionalisation of QA
  - 2.4.1 To expand the delivery of the INQAAHE Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) in terms of diversification of the language of delivery. Currently, the QAP is offered in both English and Spanish. To ensure expansion and benefits to its diverse members, further investments to offer the programme in the most prevalent languages (e.g. Chinese, Russian) will be made.
  - 2.4.2 To promote capacity building of the INQAAHE members. INQAAHE Funding Scheme is one of the means to ensure special allocation to support QA systems at different levels of development to enhance quality culture where it is most needed.
  - 2.4.3 To enable participation of INQAAHE members from low and medium income countries in the annual events through a special strand of scholarships.



**Goal 3:** To support INQAAHE members in terms of their contributions to national governments in their pursuit of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (UNSDG) #4 on Education Quality

- 3.1 Enhanced collaboration with a range of international organisations that are in line with the INQAAHE mission (e.g. UNESCO, other international organisations, regional QA networks to promote implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030, Goal 4 on Education, specifically on the HE sector).
- 3.2 Capacity building at the national and HE system levels to support INQAAHE members in their promotion of quality cause and culture.

### **Pillar III: Research/Think Tank**

**Goal 4:** To advance the body of knowledge in and ensure continued effectiveness and relevance of quality assurance and enhancement activities

- 4.1 Establishment and operationalisation of the Marjory Peace Lenn (MPL) Center as a think tank for INQAAHE (occasional papers, reports on quality and QA issues). Development of a framework promoting evaluation of integrity in HE is intended to be a priority on the Center's agenda. Another major priority is the exploration and establishment of robust mechanisms to promote consideration of QA outcomes in the recognition of HE outcomes.
- 4.2 Development of a Database of Experts within the MPL Center. The aim is to have well-equipped and certified experts to engage in the practice of GGP alignment, and to support capacity building and other developmental activities.
- 4.3 Promotion of research on QA and enhancement. Apart from research on diversification of QA provision to meet the needs of different systems, special merit will be given to the research on fighting corruption in HE and QA, and research into indigenous approaches for QA in HE in new emerging systems in the majority world. A special web-based platform will be established to collect and disseminate QA related papers and research outcomes (selected keynote speeches from conferences, contributions from members etc.).
- 4.4 Maintenance, expansion and diffusion of the Database of Good Practice.



## Pillar IV: Relevance

**Goal 5:** To advocate and promote the concept of quality assurance as the driving force for continuous improvement and enhanced relevance of HE

- 5.1 To support the INQAAHE members in their efforts to enhance the relevance of QA provisions to serve the needs set out by the national governments and HE systems.
- 5.2 To promote the role of EQAs and IQAs in the implementation, recognition and alignment with qualifications frameworks.
- 5.3 To enhance the relevance of QA provision by emphasising the links between HE provisions, the industry and labour market, as well as society at large.
- 5.4 To regularly take stock of INQAAHE's operations and those of EQAs and IQAs internationally – through the INQAAHE Global Survey - to follow up on the developmental trends, ensure identification of gaps and challenges and proposing solutions for the latter.
- 5.5 To explore new modes for QA (cluster reviews, integrated institutional and programme reviews, internal quality management, QA of new types of provision such as MOOCs, badges, modules, etc.) to ensure continuous relevance of QA within a context of change.





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