



A force for good? Exploring critical approaches to quality assurance in the Global South

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Introduction to QAA

- We are the UK's independent, not for profit, quality body
- Our work safeguards the value of qualifications for students and learners and protects and promotes the reputation of higher education
- We are a membership organisation, open to UK and international members
- We work in partnership with governments and quality agencies around the world
- We have strategic agreements with over 20 quality authorities worldwide
- We are members of international quality networks, including CHEA, ENQA and INQAAHE
- We offer a range of services across the UK and internationally
 - International institutional and programme accreditation
 - Consultancy, training, capacity-building projects, research
 - Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of transnational education (QE-TNE)



Overview of session

- 0930 – 1000 **Part 1:** Introduction to European Standards and Guidelines
- 1000 – 1100 **Part 2:** Critical approaches to ESG application in the Global South: A dialogue with Professor Hywel Coleman
 1. Conceptual issues
 2. Implementation issues
 3. Impact issues
 4. Ethical issues
- 1100 to 1115 Break
- 1115 - 1200 **Part 3:** Rethinking international accreditation



Key objectives

- To encourage participants to consider quality assurance in their own contexts
- Provide you with an understanding of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and how this is used beyond the European Higher Education Area
- Offer a platform for exploring the ethical issues in international accreditation practices
- Explore examples of good practice in accreditation, including multilateral approaches





European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

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What does quality education mean in your country

All responses to your question will be shown here

Each response can be up to 200 characters long



Definitions of quality

'Along with its ubiquity, quality means different things to different people. From my point of view, it is about how we most effectively combine expertise and capabilities in education and research with dedication and care for students to equip and empower them for the next stage of their lives. For a politician dealing with concerned constituents, it could - understandably - mean providing students with enough easily measured hours of didactic lectures. For the Treasury – legitimately - it could be best measured as a return on public investment via future salaries. For a student it might mean a mixture of the level of relevance and excitement in the curriculum, opportunities to co-create their educational experiences, and the responsiveness of the staff they encounter. For people making decisions about what university to work at, it could involve a mix of education and research rankings and the presence and power of specific research groups.'

Professor Tom Ward

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education, Newcastle University



How does QAA define quality?

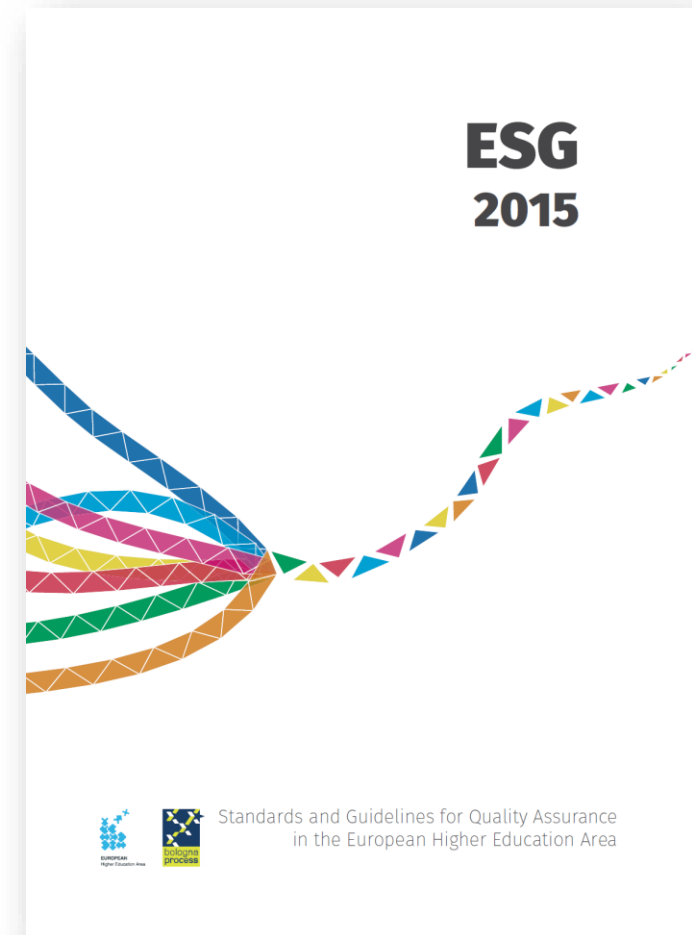
'Quality in higher education refers to how well providers support students consistently to achieve positive outcomes in learning, personal development and career advancement, while meeting the reasonable expectations of those students, employers, government and society in general'

QAA, Definition of Quality, 2023



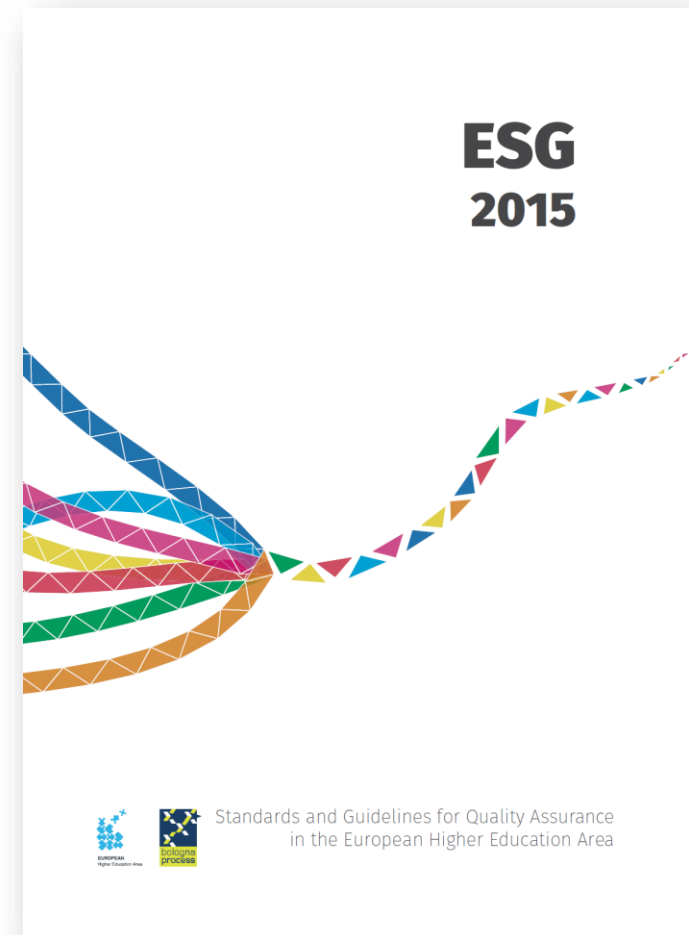
Introduction to the ESG (2015)

- The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education
- Developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in partnership with EUA, EURASHE, ESU and with contributions from Education International, Business Europe and EQAR
- ENQA membership is only open to EHEA quality assurance agencies that demonstrate their compliance with the ESG
- Adopted by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Ministerial Conference in 2015
- Implementing quality assurance in line with the ESG is one of the key commitments of the Bologna Process



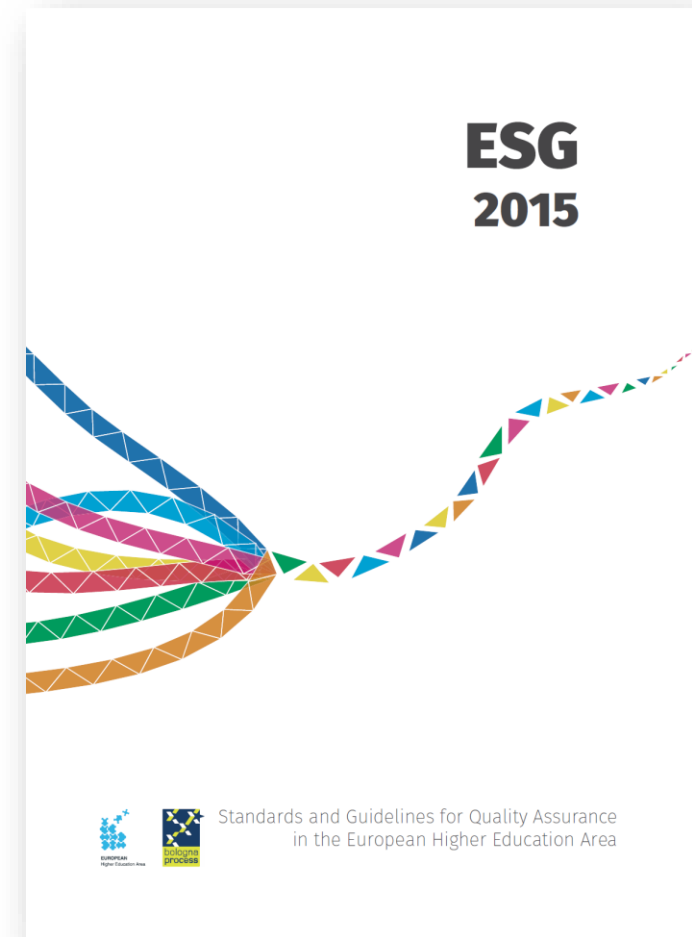
Introduction to the ESG (2015)

- EHEA is characterised by its diversity of political systems, higher education systems, socio-cultural and educational traditions, languages, aspirations and expectations
- A key goal of the ESG is to contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders
- The ESG does not prescribe how the quality assurance processes are implemented, but provides guidance, covering the areas which are vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education
- Does this design mean it can be usefully used outside of EHEA?
Does it promote a single monolithic approach to quality and quality assurance?



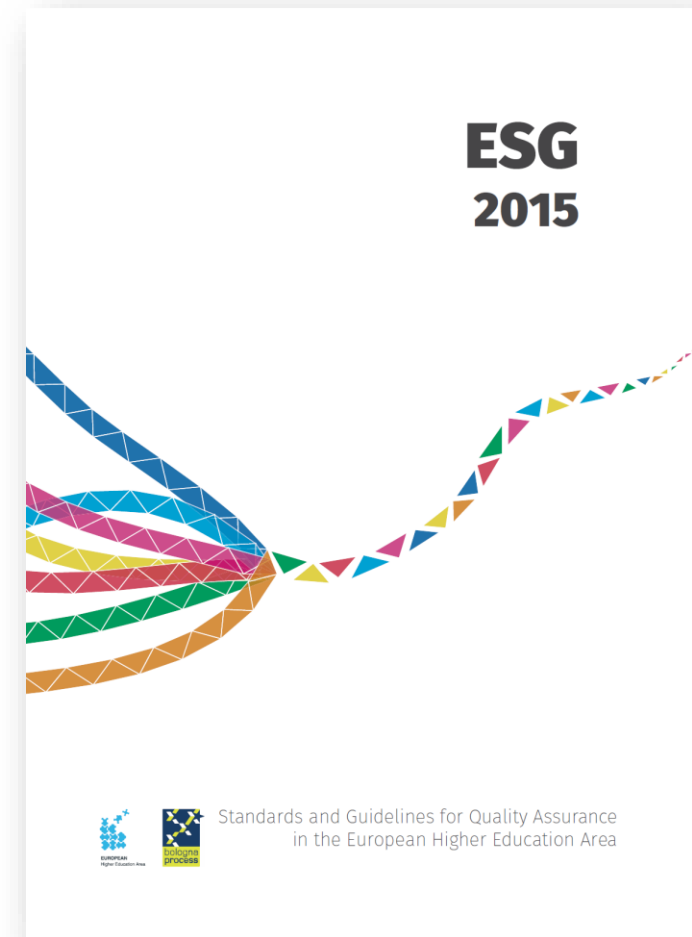
Introduction to the ESG (2015)

- The ESG are designed to be applied to all higher education, regardless of place or mode of delivery
- Divided into three parts:
 - Part 1: internal quality assurance
 - Part 2: external quality assurance
 - Part 3: quality assurance agencies
- Part 1 is used to review higher education providers. ENQA uses parts 2 and 3 to review quality assurance agencies



ESG Standards

1. Policy for quality assurance
2. Design and approval of programmes
3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
5. Teaching staff
6. Learning resources and student support
7. Information management
8. Public information
9. Ongoing monitoring and period review of programmes
10. Cyclical external quality assurance



How QAA uses the ESG

International Quality Review (IQR)



- International institutional accreditation, benchmarking against the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).
- A successful review enables institutions to demonstrate their own approaches to quality assurance are not only effective, but also comparable with international best practice

International Programme Accreditation (IPA)



- IPA assesses individual programmes against the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).
- Enables non-UK higher education institutions (HEI) to demonstrate that their approach to programme design, development, and monitoring are effective and comparable to international best practice

Examples of accreditation

Some examples of accredited institutions

Maldives National University

American University of the Middle East

Shanghai Normal University

European University of Tirana

Abu Dhabi School of Management

Macao Polytechnic University

Kuwait International Law School

University of Gibraltar

Some examples of territories where accreditation work is ongoing

Egypt

Saudi Arabia

Malaysia

Albania

Kazakhstan

Vietnam

Azerbaijan

Hong Kong SAR of China

UAE



Critical approaches to ESG application in the Global South

A conversation with Professor Hywel Coleman

- I come from the UK originally and am of Welsh ancestry. I was educated at the Universities of Oxford and Leicester among other and taught for 14 years at the University of Leeds.
- Since the early 1970s I have spent much of my life in Indonesia, involved in teaching, project management, research and lecturing. My home is in Cinere, just south of Jakarta. I am particularly interested in:
 - education policy and practice in Indonesia in general
 - language policy in Indonesia
 - English in Indonesia – its characteristics and the roles that it plays
- Outside work, I collect traditional Indonesian textiles. I am interested in how they are produced, the meanings they have and the ways that they are used.

DISCLAIMER: The author is not a specialist in educational accreditation. In looking at higher education (in Indonesia and elsewhere) he adopts an ethnographic approach, describing what is observed and avoiding qualitative judgements.



A conversation with Professor Hywel Coleman



Conceptual issues: defining quality

'Yet, the definition of quality education is constantly evolving and is always contextual. There is no one definition, list of criteria, definitive curriculum, or list of topics that comprise a quality education. **Quality education is a dynamic concept that changes and evolves with time and is modified according to the social, economic and environmental contexts.** Because quality education must be locally relevant and culturally appropriate, quality education will take many forms around the world.'

UNESCO, 2005



What values underpin higher education in your culture?

- What's the history that led to the development of a higher education in your country?
- What social and individual functions does higher education fulfill in your culture?
- Are universal standards for quality applied in your country? In which way?

Implementation issues: unintended effects

Accrediting agencies may assume institutions under review operate following values, beliefs, behaviours and practices that are common within the accrediting agency's own cultural context.

A contrario sensu, they run the **risk of interpreting as 'inadequate' something that seems to run contrary to those assumed values, beliefs, behaviours and practices.**

Does quality assurance practice reflect your cultural context?

- Is accreditation perceived as a measure of quality in your country?
- Does your accreditation activity take into account the cultural context in which the accredited lives?
- What's the relative position of stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, the community)?

Impact issues: public policy

Public authorities incentivise the achievement of international accreditation as a means to uplift standards and quality in their own systems.

This sometimes leads to ‘performative’ accreditation processes, with **a lack of transformational impact**, or of ongoing long-term engagement between the accreditor and the accredited outside of the accreditation ‘performance’.



Does accreditation foster innovation in your country?

- Do standards have a normalising effect in your country?
- Is there room for new approaches? Can we capture approaches from around the world in a single set of standards?
- How can standards maintain their relevance? i.e. the ESG were created in 2015, are they relevant for a post-Covid world?
- Is practice that diverges from expectations viewed as inadequacy or non-compliance?

Ethical issues: equity, diversity, inclusiveness

“It is no longer sufficient to ‘transfer’ Western expertise, **there are many paths to development**, each based on a different cultural base, and using different tools, techniques and organization.”

The problem is the appropriateness or lack of thereof of a Western approach that risks seeing a local higher education system as a ‘passive consumer’ of accreditation practice.

What about ethics?

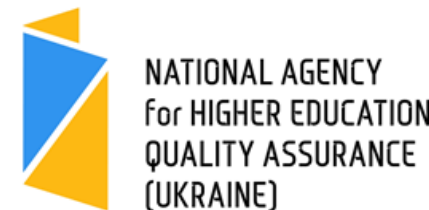
- Is it appropriate to apply European Standards and Guidelines to institutions outside of EHEA?
- Are we expecting institutions to conform to Western standards?
- Are agencies based in the Global North able to accurately understand Global South contexts?
- It is appropriate to use standards in parts of the world that have not had the opportunity to contribute to the identification of these standards?



Rethinking international quality practices

Identifying good practice: localisation

- We aim to work with local quality assurance bodies when undertaking accreditation activities overseas
- We've entered into formal strategic partnerships with 28 partner quality bodies, we are expanding our MoUs in Global South countries
- Our membership of international quality networks includes reflections on the place of international accreditation
- We work closely with British Council, Embassies, and government stakeholders on a wide variety of projects around the world



Identifying good practice: multilateralism

ACE

QAA IQR & IPA for World Bank-funded ACE Impact

- World Bank initiative aimed at capacity building of higher education institutions
- QAA has conducted reviews in Nigeria (11 institutions), Ghana (2 institutions), Ivory Coast (3 institutions)
- ‘Allows institutions to demonstrate that their quality assurance systems meet international standards, as well as access the related funding from ACE Impact’
- Uses same standards as IQR and IPA but has different administrative arrangements and timelines to work with ACE Impact
- The review method has been amended to be sensitive to the regional context of the ACE programme
- Includes reviewers with experience in higher education in West Africa
- Includes reviewers with local language abilities

African Higher Education
Centers of Excellence Project



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WORLD BANK GROUP



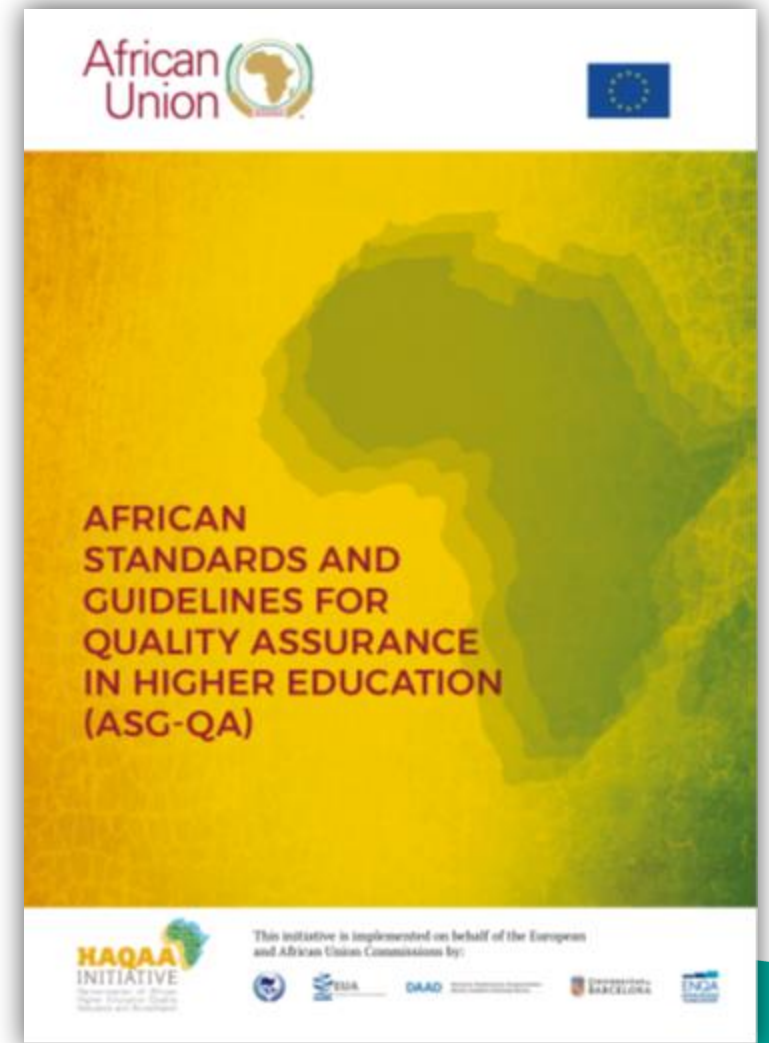
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DE DÉVELOPPEMENT



Identifying good practice: locally developed standards

African Standards and Guidelines

- The Harmonisation of African Higher Education, Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative, a partnership between the European Union and the African Union, supports the development of a harmonised quality assurance and accreditation system at institutional, national, regional and Pan-African continental level.
- 'PAQAF'- The Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework: a commitment to develop African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, an African Credit Transfer System and a continental register for quality assurance agencies and national bodies.
- African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) 2018, a major reference document for organising and evaluating international and external quality assurance.



Going forward

- Engage Global South policymakers, institutions and quality networks in **developing commonly agreed frameworks**
- Allocate adequate resources to **regional networks** in ASEAN, Africa, LatAm, etc.
- Reflect about **non-European perspectives** when reviewing the ESG
- Research the **long-term impact of international accreditation** in host countries / institutions
- Involve local reviewers and ensure **reviewers are trained to be aware** of their own biases



Key takeaways

- There are **multiple tensions to manage**: universal – local; innovative – normative; individual – collective; hierarchical – egalitarian
- Different **world views influence different learning methods** – but no one has the right world view
- But **international accreditation is international** – there has to be a level of comparability
- We can never eradicate our own biases – but **we can be aware of them**
- Remember **the student sits at the heart of everything**



Thank you

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Registered charity numbers: 1062746 and SC037786

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