

INDEPENDENT KAZAKH AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION (IQAA)

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

Astana, 2015

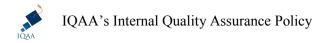


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1. General provisions

The Internal Quality Assurance Policy (hereinafter the Policy) is aimed at describing and structuring the mechanisms of internal quality assurance of the activities of Independent Kazakh Quality Assurance Agency in Education (hereinafter IQAA, the Agency). The Policy should be considered in connection with other normative documents of IQAA and is obligatory for compliance by all IQAA staff.

The Policy defines interaction of all elements of the Agency's internal quality assurance system, while distribution of responsibilities within the processes is regulated by the relevant normative documents of IQAA.

IQAA places the same high quality demands on its own work as placed on educational institutions under review, experts and other participants of the accreditation cycle procedures. Establishment of its own internal quality assurance system reflects the IQAA's willingness and readiness to improve its activities, developing its own quality culture.

Aims of internal quality assurance of IQAA:

- To ensure correct implementation of the Agency's standardized procedures;

- To ensure strict adherence to internal normative documents of IQAA;

- To timely inform the management of the Agency on violation of any standardized procedures of IQAA in order to take corrective measures;

- To increase satisfaction of the Agency's service consumers (educational institutions) and stakeholders (students, employers, public at large);

- To create conditions for constant enhancement of the Agency's activities;

- To promote economic and effective use of the Agency's resources;

- To motivate the Agency's staff for on-going professional development;

- To serve as a basis for cyclical external quality assurance.

Principles of internal quality assurance of IQAA:

- Awareness of every staff member of his/her personal responsibility for achievement of IQAA's common goals;

- The use of effective incentive measures for all staff members;

- Study, analysis and consideration of stakeholders' opinions to improve the Agency's procedures;

- Equal approach to all educational institutions – IQAA's activities are based on the same principles, rules and procedures;

- Application of modern and effective management and information technologies for fulfillment of established objectives with the optimal use of time and material resources;

- High demand to the quality of professional competence of IQAA staff members and peer-review experts, required for implementation of their duties;

- Promoting a quality culture among the Agency's staff, their training in the field of quality assurance in education;

- Accountability to the public, transparency of accreditation procedures and results;

- On-going modernization and enhancement of the current system of internal quality assurance.

2. Human Resources Policy

Human resources potential is one of the key factors for successful activities of the Agency. All procedures directly depend on staff's qualification, the extent to which it corresponds with the objectives established by the Agency, the fact whether these objectives are supported by a relevant system of motivation, how these or other management decisions influence on the effectiveness of the staff's activities. Organizational culture is one of the basis for the Agency's existence. It includes the mission, policy, vision, aims and values of IQAA, which are shared by all the staff.

Recruiting. Replacement of vacant positions is made on a competitive basis. New positions are created based on the necessity for additional competences or because of the increase in the workload in specific fields. Vacancy announcements are posted on IQAA's website, section "Vacancies", and recruiting hostings, such as <u>www.hh.kz</u>. In selection of staff, IQAA is guided by the following key requirements: work experience in higher education system (academic, administrative and/or managerial), research degree and research title or academic degree obtained in a leading national or foreign university, scientific research activity in the field of education, professional ethics, high communicative skills, and linguistic competences.

Professional conduct. IQAA recognizes commitment to quality as a necessary requirement for on-going improvement of its activities. The Agency established high professional standards to its staff members. We work with everyone (individuals, organizations, authority bodies, etc.) with respect, dignity and courtesy. IQAA staff work with adherence to ethical norms, high quality culture, meeting requirements of accountability and efficiency. All IQAA staff members bear responsibility for quality and timely implementation of their official duties.

Requirements on adherence to moral and ethical norms by the staff are stipulated in the Code of Honor of IQAA staff, according to which relations with colleagues, management, educational institutions and all stakeholders should be built on the basis of good faith, courtesy, tactfulness, responsibility, trust, decency, mutual respect and cooperation. Upon employment to the Agency, a new employee should familiarize with the Code of Honor of IQAA staff and sign it.

The policy of conflict management operates on the basis of principles of individual consideration and settlement of every conflict, confidentiality of conflict disclosure, and a balance of interests of both parties.

Professional development. The system of qualifications, which includes titles and categories of staff, as well as required competences, knowledge and skills, distribution of responsibilities and powers, is defined by the Agency's organizational structure, provisions on departments and staff's job descriptions. Powers of collegial bodies of IQAA are defined in relevant regulations.

IQAA pays special attention to training and professional development of its staff. The Agency invites renowned experts in the fields of quality assurance in

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education and higher education, heads of foreign quality assurance agencies and networks on quality assurance in education. IQAA staff participate in national and foreign events devoted to questions of quality assurance in education (forums, seminars, webinars, etc.).

The server (internal folder) of IQAA provides access to materials on best practice of foreign quality assurance agencies. The website of IQAA has a library with direct links to research papers and publications in the field of quality assurance.

Motivation. To recognize the staff's contribution to achievement of common goals, encourage loyalty, promote initiative and create a positive example in the staff, IQAA has material (bonus) and non-material (gratitude/merit letter) forms of encouragement of its employees. In addition, there is a bonus for all staff members according to the results of work at the end of a calendar year.

All IQAA staff regularly (not less than once a year) participate in a questionnaire on their satisfaction with conditions of work and feedback on management of the Agency. This questionnaire is conducted to receive objective information on working conditions, recommendations on improvement of the Agency's activities, defining priorities and needs of staff.

Team spirit. For personal development of staff and strengthening the team spirit the Agency organizes group visits to cultural events of the city (theatre performance, exhibitions, etc.). The management of IQAA encourages joint celebration of national holidays and staff's birthdays. Team building events are important because largely thanks to them employees of the Agency see themselves as part of a team.

The Agency values and encourages mutual help and team work in its everyday activities.

3. Peer-review experts

High competence and professionalism of peer-review experts ensure quality of implemented accreditation procedures. IQAA pays special attention to careful selection and regular training of all expert group members.

Selection and training. Selection of experts for external reviews is carried out in an established manner on the basis of the following sources:

- Expert database of IQAA;

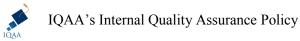
- Recommendations of educational institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan;

- Recommendations of foreign quality assurance agencies – IQAA's partners;

- Recommendations of the National Association "Expert";

- Direct request of candidates from educational institutions in case of rare specialties.

In addition, the website of IQAA provides in open access an application form for those who want to become an IQAA expert. Candidates, who meet requirements of the Agency, but do not have practical experience in accreditation procedures, can be added to the IQAA expert database only after they have undergone IQAA training and have received a certificate.



The Agency has developed requirements on selecting competent experts. Every expert group obligatorily includes representatives of academic community, employers, students and international experts. IQAA gives preference to experts with experience in accreditation procedures and evidence-based positive feedback (e.g., from online Survey Monkey questionnaire).

Training of experts is held in accordance with the Guidelines on external review, Standards and guidelines on external quality assurance for accreditation procedures, Standards and criteria of institutional/specialized accreditation. Department of Audit and Post-accreditation Monitoring of HEIs/TVET organizations fulfill organization and administration of training events for experts.

Expert database of IQAA. It is a main source of information in selection of experts for external reviews.

The database is a document in MS Excel Word and includes the following categories of experts: national experts, international experts, representatives of employers, and representatives of students. All experts are classified by units according to the field of knowledge (e.g., Economics, Medicine, Philology, Art, etc.) Heads of expert groups are listed in the beginning of the unit. More experienced experts, who have participated in accreditation procedures several times and showed themselves only from a positive side (according to the Survey Monkey cross questionnaire) can be highlighted in a commentary section. Experts, who received negative characteristics in an online questionnaire, should be placed in a "black list of experts" of the expert database.

The expert database for HEIs and TVET organizations is administered and updated by the Department of Analysis and Quality and the Department of Audit and Post-accreditation Monitoring of TVET organizations respectively, and is made available in the server of IQAA for all staff, involved in organization and conduct of accreditation procedures.

Absence of conflict of interest. An essential condition for experts to participate in an external review is the absence of conflict of interest. The Code of Honor for accreditation experts of IQAA regulates that expert group members are independent in execution of their expert duties, do not represent interest of the organization, where they work or study, as well as do not allow interference to their expert work and lobbying interests of individual subjects. The Code of Honor also declares experts' obligations for fairness, impartiality, ethical behavior, professionalism and confidentiality (non-disclosure of confidential information).

4. Quality assurance of core processes

Quality assurance of core processes of IQAA's activities is based on a model of organizational management cycle *"Plan-Do-Check-Act"*, which reflects sequence and cyclical nature of processes.

Design and planning ("Plan"). Standards and procedures of the IQAA's accreditation cycle are developed on the basis of best international practices, European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher



Education Area (ESG), national legislation and priorities of state policy in education, taking into account stakeholders' opinions.

IQAA is driven by the principle that main responsibility for quality of education lies on educational institutions. The Agency respects academic freedom of educational institutions, their identity, established traditions and profile of educational activity.

Standards and procedures of the IQAA's accreditation cycle are developed in order to stimulate development and on-going enhancement of internal quality assurance systems of educational institutions, formation of a quality culture in educational area and public consciousness, and highlighting good practice, which educational institutions demonstrate. The Agency aims to impact on enhancement of educational activities of institutions in order to ensure best educational experience for all learners.

Accreditation model of IQAA follows a generally accepted practice of the European Higher Education Area: self-assessment of an educational institution/study programme, external review (audit) by an independent expert group, decision-making on accreditation by the Accreditation Council, and post-accreditation monitoring.

Realization ("Do"). IQAA's accreditation cycle procedures use pre-defined and published norms and requirements for assessment of quality in education. The Agency applies the same standards and criteria of accreditation for all educational institutions, regardless of their territorial location, form of ownership (public or private), and legal organizational form (Republican state enterprise on the right of economic management, JSC, LLP, etc.) Standards of institutional and specialized (programme) accreditation of higher education institutions, TVET organizations, and research institutes with educational units reflect specificity of a certain level of education.

Standards of accreditation, guidelines and other normative documents of IQAA clearly regulate the scope of application, sequence of procedures and responsibilities of individuals.

Training of experts is intended to ensure a uniform interpretation and a consistent application of standards and other IQAA's normative documents by different expert groups.

The Agency provides informational and methodological support to educational institutions and peer-review experts on all stages of the accreditation cycle.

Control ("Check"). Department of Analysis and Quality implements ongoing control for IQAA staff's compliance with requirements of effectiveness and timeliness of accreditation procedures. An important tool of control is an online cross questionnaire (survey) of all participants of accreditation procedures. The following questionnaire forms are used for this:

Form 1 (assessment of a coordinator by expert group members)

Form 2 (assessment of a coordinator by an educational institution)

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Form 3 (assessment of a head of the expert group by coordinators and expert group members)

Form 4 (assessment of an expert group member by coordinators)

Form 5 (assessment of an expert group by an educational institution)

Form 6 (assessment of an experts, who conduct expert evaluation of self-assessment reports of educational institutions/study programmes by a coordinator).

Analysis of the questionnaire results is made after each external review (audit). The results are given in an analytical reference, which includes statistical data by different groups, conclusions and recommendations. The findings are discussed at general meetings of IQAA staff.

In the questionnaire the Agency ensures its consistency and sequence, anonymity of participation, confidentiality of data, respondents' awareness on aims and significance of the questionnaire, completeness, reliability and accessibility of results. Information received in the online cross questionnaire is used for development of the system of internal quality assurance of IQAA.

Corrective measures ("Act"). The management of the Agency takes preventive and corrective measures on the basis of the on-going monitoring.

Educational institutions have access to appeal and complaint procedures. Consideration of appeals and complaints allows to control and assess efficiency of the procedures used, maintain openness and responsibility of IQAA staff and is a part of the strategy aimed at enhancement of quality of activities implemented by IQAA and its expert groups.

5. Internal and external communication

Internal communication. Tools of internal communication of IQAA include telephone connection, corporate e-mail, internal chat, server, common staff meetings.

The server provides all necessary information on the questions of IQAA's activities, template forms, informational and analytical materials for staff, including study of best practices of foreign quality assurance agencies. The access to the server is open for all staff members, whereas changes to the structure of the server, addition of information and modification of documents are available only for heads of departments and the President of IQAA. Information for the content of the server is submitted by all departments according to questions of their competences. Technical support is provided by the Department of Expert Evaluation and Information Technologies.

At common staff meetings (scheduled and unscheduled) employees discuss current working moments, challenges, questions, conduct mutual assessment of actions and give their suggestions. The results of meetings are documented in minutes and kept in the Administrative Department.

External communication. Tools of external communication of IQAA include telephone connection, fax, corporate e-mail, post service, Polycom

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videoconference, website of IQAA, web-pages in Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, quarterly informational newsletter of IQAA, mass media sources.

Every IQAA employee has a corporate e-mail with the domain name @iqaa.kz. Official letters, including invitations to experts for participation in external reviews, shall be sent on an official letterhead of IQAA. Incoming and outgoing correspondence is registered in the relevant logs by an administrator of IQAA.

General inquiries on IQAA's activities come to e-mail address <u>info@iqaa.kz</u>, which is stated in the "Contacts" section on IQAA's website, and are ascribed to certain employees, who process an enquiry and give a respond as needed.

The IQAA's official website <u>www.iqaa.kz</u> presents information on the mission and activity of the Agency, topical events and news in the field of quality assurance in education, normative base on accreditation procedures, and thus is an important source of information for all stakeholders. Design of the website is aimed at different target groups: educational institutions, experts, students and their parents, other stakeholders (public authorities, mass media, foreign partners, etc.). Information on the website is given in three languages (Kazakh, Russian, English). Language support is provided by the Department of Analysis and Quality. Preparation of material, replenishment, and update of information are implemented by all Departments according to their competences. President of IQAA approves materials for publication. Technical support, including design, administration and modernization of the website, is provided by the Department of Expert Evaluation and Information Technologies.

In communication with public authorities, educational institutions, experts, stakeholders, mass media and the public at large IQAA staff is guided by such moral and ethical norms as professional ethics, communication culture, goodwill, as well as provisions of the Code of Honor of IQAA staff. Every staff member should keep in mind that he/she forms image of the Agency in the public eye.

6. Management of documentation

Normative documents of IQAA regulate all procedures of the accreditation cycle, form labor and performance discipline, allow to conduct monitoring of compliance with standardized procedures of the Agency. Documents are issued on a paper and/or electronic carrier. The list of normative documents of IQAA is available in *Annex 1* to this Policy.

Design and approval. Internal normative documents of the Agency (standards and criteria, guidelines, instructions, etc.) are developed by the relevant department of IQAA, the competence of which is the issue in question. In development of the documents, the department considers good practice of foreign quality assurance agencies, stakeholders' opinions and interests, recommendations and suggestions from the IQAA staff. Language support is provided by the Department of Analysis and Quality, while technical support is ensured by the Department of Expert Evaluation and Information Technologies. Normative

documents of IQAA are approved by the Accreditation Council and the President of IQAA. Operative documents are available in the server for the Agency's staff and the website of IQAA for the public.

Review and update. Annually the Agency checks internal normative documents for any updates needed. Review of documents is based on feedback analysis, recommendations from experts, educational institutions and IQAA staff, good practice of foreign quality assurance agencies, changes of the national legislation and external environment, etc. Additions and amendments to the documents take place as needed. A revised version of the document is approved by the Accreditation Council and the President of IQAA. It is then informed to the Agency staff by placing it in the server or sending to a corporate e-mail. It is also made public for all stakeholders on the website of IQAA. The revised documents are introduced to the work of the Agency's departments.

7. Management of material resources

IQAA is devoted to creation of favorable and comfortable conditions for its staff's work. Each work place is equipped with necessary equipment and materials. The IQAA office provides special zones for staff to have rest and take meal.

The Agency adheres to the following basic principles of management of material resources:

timely and full provision of employees with resources;

➢ use of modern technical tools and information systems to implement IQAA's objectives;

Economic and effective use of resources;

Careful use of the material and technical basis of the Agency by the staff;

Ensuring regular feedback of staff on the question of their satisfaction and needs in resources by means of a questionnaire.

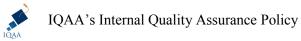
8. Cooperation with foreign quality assurance agencies

In the framework of its activities IQAA cooperates with foreign quality assurance agencies for experience exchange, sharing good practice, developing joint projects and exchange of experts. The cooperation is built on principles of equality, partnership, transparency and integrity. The Agency concludes memoranda and relevant agreements on cooperation with foreign agencies. The main fields of mutual cooperation are ascribed to:

 \checkmark share experience in the field of procedures and mechanisms of accreditation of educational institutions and their study programmes;

 \checkmark promote cooperation in the process of accreditation by exchange and training of competent experts;

 \checkmark cooperate in conducting seminars, conferences, round tables aimed at improving the system of quality assurance in education;



 \checkmark advise on improvement of standards and criteria of institutional and specialized (programme) accreditation;

 \checkmark mutually represent the accreditation-related interests at national and international levels and support promotion of services provided by partners;

 \checkmark conduct any other cooperation activities agreed by the Parties.

IQAA enters and maintains membership in regional and international networks of quality assurance in education. Representatives of the Agency participate in events and projects, organized by these networks.

9. Public accountability

IQAA informs stakeholders and the public at large about its activities and results of the activities in the framework of quality assurance in education. This implies publication of standards, regulations and other normative documents of the Agency, used for assessment and accreditation of educational institutions and study programmes, as well as accreditation results: external review reports, presentations made by coordinators and decisions of the Accreditation Council. The lists of accredited educational institutions and study programmes are available on the IQAA website in three languages (Kazakh, Russian, English). IQAA regularly submits information on accredited educational institutions and study programmes to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for their inclusion to the relevant National Registers.

The Agency conducts thematic analysis in the field of higher education and quality assurance in education, studies best foreign practices in accreditation, publishes press releases, and issues a quarterly informational bulletin and annual reports of its activities.

In addition, informational messages and printed materials on the questions of best practices in quality assurance are disseminated by the Agency during trainings, seminars and conferences organized by it.

IQAA attaches importance to clarity and accessibility of the language used in its reports, as well as to the relevancy and usefulness of published materials for a wide range of readers.

10. Final provisions

This Policy is developed, amended and added by the Department of Analysis and Quality and is approved by the President of IQAA. Ongoing monitoring for proper observance of the Policy is executed by the Department of Analysis and Quality and the President of IQAA with the aim to take preventive or corrective measures as needed. Each staff member of the Agency can give suggestions for improvement of the Policy. There can be made amendments and additions to the Policy taking into account relevant changes and additions in normative documents of the Agency, national legislation in the field of accreditation and other external factors.

A list of normative documents of IQAA

No.	Area	Regulation
2	Human resources policy	➢ Statute of IQAA
		➤ IQAA Strategy of Development for 2015-2018
		Organizational structure of IQAA
		➤ Job descriptions of staff
		Provision on IQAA
		Provisions on Departments of IQAA
		Employment contracts of staff
		➤ Code of Honor for IQAA employees
		➢ Personal files of staff
		Annual working plans of the Agency
		Annual reports on IQAA's activities
		Orders on appointment of employees
		Orders on dismissal of employees
		Orders on bonus payment to employees
		Orders on secondment of employees
		Other orders related to HR policy
3	Peer-review experts	Code of Honor for Accreditation Experts of IQAA
		Procedure of selecting experts for external review (audit)
		➢ IQAA Database of experts
		Orders on appointment of expert groups
		Standards and Guidelines of External Quality Assurance for Institutional and Specialized
		(Programme) Accreditation Procedures
		Contracts with experts for rendering services
		Seminars, trainings, conferences for peer-review experts



IQAA		Certificate of accreditation expert
4	Quality assurance of core	Standards of institutional accreditation for organizations of higher and postgraduate
	processes	education
		Standards of specialized (programme) accreditation for organizations of higher and
		postgraduate education
		Standards of institutional accreditation for TVET organizations
		Standards of specialized (programme) accreditation for TVET organizations
		Standards of specialized (programme) accreditation for higher and postgraduate education (medical residency programmes)
		Standards and Guidelines of External Quality Assurance for Institutional and Specialized
		(Programme) Accreditation Procedures
		> Guidelines on organization and conduct of a self-assessment procedure in educational
		institutions
		➤ Guidelines on organization and conduct of a self-assessment procedure of study programmes
		Procedure of selecting experts for external review (audit)
		➢ IQAA Database of experts
		Orders on appointment of expert groups for external reviews
		➢ Requirements to expert evaluation on a self-assessment report of an educational institution
		in the framework of institutional and/or specialized (programme) accreditation
		Guidelines on organization and conduct of a preliminary audit in educational institutions
		➢ Guidelines on organization and conduct of an external review (audit) for procedures of
		institutional and specialized (programme) accreditation
		Guidelines for student-experts participating in accreditation procedures
		> Instruction for coordinators on organization and conduct of an external review (audit) in
		the framework of institutional and specialized (programme) accreditation
		A typical programme of an external review (audit) for institutional accreditation
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➢ Web-site www.iqaa.kz	
	➢ Internal server
	➢ Web-site www.iqaa.kz
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		➢ Budget of IQAA
		Applications for the purchase of consumables
	resources	> Protocols of the inventory of the material and technical base
7	Management of material	> Agreements on material liability of employees
		➤ Web-site www.iqaa.kz
		> Internal server
		Corporate e-mail of IQAA employees
		> Minutes
		> Orders
		> Archive
		 File register
		 > Official letterhead of IQAA
0	Document management	 Registration log of incoming correspondence Registration log of outgoing correspondence
6	Document management	 Registration log of incoming correspondence
		 Web-site www.iqaa.kz Press releases
		 Web-site www.iqaa.kz
		 Minutes of general staff meetings Internal server
		 Instruction for Polycom video-conference Minutes of a grant staff magning.
		Corporate e-mail of IQAA employees
		> Official letterhead of IQAA
	communication	Registration log of outgoing correspondence
5	Internal and external	Registration log of incoming correspondence
		A form of accreditation certificate for educational institutions and study programmes
		IQAA's list of accredited study programmes
		IQAA's list of accredited educational institutions
		Contracts with experts for rendering service



8	Cooperation with foreign	➤ Strategy of Development of IQAA for 2015-2018
	quality assurance agencies	Memoranda (agreements) on cooperation
		Membership in regional and international networks of quality assurance agencies
		Joint projects
		Organization and conduct of seminars, trainings and conferences
		Exchange of information, visits and experts
		Participation in international events of networks/associations/organizations of quality
		assurance in education
9	Public accountability	➤ Strategy of Development of IQAA for 2015-2018
		➤ Web-site <u>www.iqaa.kz</u>
		IQAA's list of accredited educational institutions
		IQAA's list of accredited study programmes
		External review reports
		Presentations of coordinators on the results of external reviews for the Accreditation
		Council
		➤ Thematic analyses
		Annual reports on IQAA's activities
		➢ Informational bulletin of IQAA
		Press releases
		> Publications
		➢ Facebook web-page of IQAA
		➤ Twitter web-page of IQAA
		➢ YouTube channel of IQAA

Annex 2



The system of internal quality assurance of IQAA