



**AQAN**

ASEAN Quality Assurance Network

**ASEAN  
QUALITY  
ASSURANCE  
FRAMEWORK**

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### **Internal Continuous Improvement System**

A system established and carried out by the higher education institutions to improve and enhance the quality of its programmes and institutions.

### **Self-assessment Report**

A report prepared by the higher education institutions for the purpose of quality audit that indicates whether the higher education institutions have achieved the quality standards required.

### **Reviewers/ Assessors**

A group of experts on the quality assurance of higher education carry out quality audits towards the higher education institutions. They are well-versed of the standards, policies and good practices of the respective areas of qualifications.

### **Institutional Autonomy**

A sufficient autonomy given to the higher education institutions in terms of curriculum development and implementation, resource allocation, supervision of student, academically-related administrative duties, scholarly activities and any related academic or administration matters as well as adherence to the prescribed quality standards and policies.

## ABBREVIATION

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- |     |        |  |
|-----|--------|--|
| 1)  | ACC    | Accreditation Committee of Cambodia, Cambodia                            |
| 2)  | AMS    | ASEAN Member State   |
| 3)  | AQAF   | ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework  |
| 4)  | AQAN   | ASEAN Quality Assurance Network  |
| 5)  | ATAC   | AQAN Advisory Technical Committee  |
| 6)  | AUN    | ASEAN University Network   |
| 7)  | BDNAC  | Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council, Brunei                 |
| 8)  | CHED   | Commission on Higher Education, Philippines                              |
| 9)  | EQA    | External Quality Assurance   |
| 10) | EQAA   | External Quality Assurance Agencies                                      |
| 11) | FAA    | Finance Accreditation Agency, Malaysia                                   |
| 12) | GDETA  | General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation, Vietnam       |
| 13) | IQA    | Internal Quality Assurance   |
| 14) | MQA    | Malaysian Qualifications Agency, Malaysia                                |
| 15) | NAAAA  | National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation, Timor Leste   |
| 16) | NAAHE  | National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, Indonesia            |
| 17) | NQF    | National Qualifications Framework  |
| 18) | OHEC   | Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand                      |
| 19) | ONESQA | Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, Thailand |

- |     |               |  |
|-----|---------------|--|
| 20) | PAASCU        | Philippines Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities, Philippines                   |
| 21) | PDCA          | Plan-Do-Check-Act  |
| 22) | QA            | Quality Assurance  |
| 23) | QF            | Qualifications Framework   |
| 24) | SAR           | Self-Assessment Report   |
| 25) | SEAMEO        | Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization  |
| 26) | SEAMEO RETRAC | Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Training Center                             |
| 27) | SEAMEO RIHED  | Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development |

### 1.1. Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formally established by the Bangkok Declaration in 1967 with the agreement of six countries and later was joined by four others. With a current population of 625 million, the ASEAN 2020 aspires to be a stable, prosperous and highly competitive ASEAN economic region in which there is free flow of goods, services, investment and skilled workers towards equitable economic development as well as reduced poverty, social and economic disparity. The integration plans have been outlined in the 3 pillars – ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The post-2015 plans will provide deeper integration to continue building the ASEAN Community by 2020.

Human development through education and training is a predominant factor in ASEAN on addressing ASEAN agenda for all member states towards a single community. Thus, building and enhancing quality of education and training must be addressed adequately. The 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Directors General, Secretary General, Commissioners of Higher Education in Southeast Asia provided for the development of a concept and concrete steps to promote sustainable development of higher education through the establishment of the ASEAN Framework and Roadmap for Sustainability Education 2011-2015.

### 1.2. Development of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network

Since mid-2007, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization-Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED) has started to be the key promoter to raise the awareness among policy decision makers and academics on the importance of the process of harmonization in higher education in Southeast Asia. “The Proposal on the Structured Framework for Regional Integration in Higher

Education in SEA: the Road towards a Common Space” was submitted to the 30<sup>th</sup> High Officials Meeting, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Director Generals/Secretary General and Commissioner responsible for higher education meeting. The proposal was finally endorsed by the Ministers of Education during the SEAMEO Council Meeting in March 2008.

For the purpose of harmonization and creating a higher education common space, the Roadmap identifies the needs for a regional quality assurance framework, capacity building of all stakeholders through cooperation; student mobility; a regional credit system; and promotion of benefits of quality assurance amongst others.

In the same year, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration led to the establishment of ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) to share good practices of quality assurance in higher education, collaborate on capacity building and facilitate the recognition of qualifications and cross-border mobility throughout the region and to develop a regional quality assurance framework for Southeast Asia.

AQAN is a network of 10 national quality assurance authorities and ministries responsible for higher education among the ASEAN member countries, namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

On July 8, 2008, the officials of these quality assurance authorities and ministries adopted the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the establishment of the AQAN.

The Kuala Lumpur declaration reads:

*“Realizing the active movement towards the development of an ASEAN Economic Community;*

*Conscious of the benefits of collaboration and sharing, and the crucial role of quality assurance in promoting harmonization in higher education;*

*Mindful of the diversity and the different stages of the development of quality assurance systems and agencies at national levels;*

*Acknowledging the mutual interests and common concerns amongst them;*

*Affirming the need for closer relationship between people in the region through mobility of students, faculty and programs;*

*Desiring to complement the role of regional and international quality assurance networks;”*

### **1.3. Legal status and Membership**

AQAN is a registered international association network under the Societies Act 1966, Malaysia. It was formally registered on 25 July, 2014. The AQAN Secretariat is currently based at the Malaysian Qualifications Agency. AQAN was accredited to be as an entity associated with ASEAN on 1 August 2016.

AQAN has two categories of membership. Full members are the national quality assurance agencies or authorities responsible for quality assurance of higher education or any other organisations as determined by the Roundtable meeting from time to time. While the associate members are other organisations in Southeast Asian countries with a major interest and active involvement in external quality assurance and quality promotion in higher education as determined by the Roundtable.

The following are the list of AQAN members as of December 2015:

#### **Full Members:**

1. Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council (BDNAC), Brunei
2. Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), Cambodia
3. National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (NAAHE), Indonesia
4. Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Lao P.D.R.

5. Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), Malaysia
6. Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Upper Myanmar
7. Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Philippines
8. Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Singapore
9. Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA), Thailand
10. General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation, Ministry of Education and Training (GDETA), Vietnam

**Associate Members:**

1. National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation, Ministry of Education (NAAAA), Timor Leste
2. ASEAN University Network (AUN)
3. Southeast Asian Ministries of Education Organization Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED)
4. Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Training Center (SEAMEO-RETRAC)
5. Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC), Thailand
6. Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU), Philippines
7. Finance Accreditation Agency (FAA), Malaysia

#### **1.4. Development of ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF)**

In October 2011, the AQAN Roundtable Meeting in Bandar Seri Begawan decided to embark on a project to develop an ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education (AQAFHE) for Southeast Asian region. A task force was established with representation of officials from the MQA, SEAMEO RIHED, PAASCU, ONESQA, GDETA, AUN and BDNAC to undertake the project.

The purpose of AQAFHE is to promote regional harmonization in higher education by developing a quality assurance framework in higher education with regional identities where the ASEAN countries could benchmark and align their quality assurance systems

of higher education. Its development will also facilitate regional recognition of degrees and qualifications. AQAFHE will serve as a common reference point for quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions as they strive towards harmonization amidst the diversity of higher education systems, cultures and traditions within the region.

In the 2013 AQAN Round Table Meeting in Hanoi, AQAFHE was approved. However, in the following year AQAFHE was shortened to ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF) to make it more inclusive.

The Framework consists of four sets of interrelated principles, namely:

1. External Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAA)
2. External Quality Assurance (EQA) Standards and Processes
3. Institutional Quality Assurance (IQA)
4. National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

Each principle focuses on core statements. The Framework will serve as a common reference point for quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions as they strive towards harmonization amidst the diversity of higher education systems, cultures and traditions within the region. The Framework uses generic principles and statements of good practice. It is not prescriptive. Its purpose is to promote good practices for internal and external quality assurance as well as the establishment and implementation of national qualifications frameworks in the ASEAN Member States (AMS).

It seeks to provide a common ground and understanding of quality assurance within ASEAN countries. Its generic principles will find resonance on the national level. Consistency of quality assurance practices across Southeast Asia will be improved through the use of these principles.

Procedures for the recognition of qualifications will also be strengthened and credibility of the work of quality assurance agencies will be enhanced. This framework

will support the mobility within ASEAN community. Mutual trust and understanding among institutions and quality assurance agencies will grow and mutual recognition of accrediting decisions will be fast-tracked.

### **1.5. Other Related Regional Developments**

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) is a common reference framework that serves as a device to enable comparisons of qualifications across AMS. It addresses education and training sectors and the wider objective of promoting lifelong learning. Notably, the AQRF was developed through the Project on Education and Training Governance: Capacity Building for National Qualifications Frameworks (AANZ-0007) which was part of the AANZFTA Economic Cooperation Work Programme (ECWP) with a task force consisting of ASEAN representatives.

Other than enabling comparisons of qualifications across member states, the purposes of AQRF are to encourage the development of qualifications frameworks that can facilitate lifelong learning, encourage the development of national approaches to validating learning gained outside formal education, promote and encourage education and learner mobility, promote worker mobility, lead to better understood qualifications systems and promote higher quality qualifications systems.

A key requirement for the effective function of the Framework is a robust and comparable quality assurance system in the AMS. It is intended that AQAF, an indigenously developed framework for quality assurance will be able to function as a reference point to each national system.

Apart from building zone of trust for the purpose of facilitating recognition of qualifications within the ASEAN region and without, it is also instrumental to accelerate the harmonization of higher education within ASEAN and to address the ASEAN integration agenda.

## **2.1. Purposes of ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework**

In dealing with these principles and statements, the following are to be considered:

- The primary purpose of the Framework is to enhance the quality of education in the ASEAN region and to support the mobility of students, workers and professionals, both within and outside the region.
- Each educational system has evolved in a specific context and is influenced by cultural and historical factors. These Principles can be adapted in various political, legal, and cultural settings without compromising a country's basic values and traditions.
- The Framework enables quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions in each country to improve themselves and to align with others across the region.

## **2.2. Principle Statements of ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework**

### **1. Principles of External Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA)**

The EQAA is a key player in maintaining and sustaining the quality of education in every nation and puts at center stage the interests of students and various stakeholders. The following statements are the important first steps towards the establishment of a shared set of values and good practices for EQAA across the region to ensure that professionalism, accountability and integrity of the agencies are visible and transparent to their stakeholders.

- 1.1. The EQAA in the ASEAN countries have mission and common goals statements.
- 1.2. The EQAA has an established legal basis and is formally recognized and trusted by competent public authorities in its home country.
- 1.3. The EQAA has autonomous responsibility for its operations and its decision making processes and judgments are free from undue influences.
- 1.4. The EQAA has a standard and transparent system for appointing members of the Board.
- 1.5. The EQAA's policies and management practices are based on good governance, transparency and accountability.
- 1.6. The EQAA keeps abreast with new developments and innovations in quality assurance as part of its internal continuous improvement system.
- 1.7. The EQAA has sufficient and adequate resources.

- 1.8. The EQAA collaborates with key stakeholders, both nationally and internationally.
- 1.9. The EQAA has a reliable system for controlling, auditing and assessing all processes of its operations.
- 1.10. The EQAA keeps the public informed of its current policies, procedures, criteria, standards and assessment results.

Examples of sources of evidence:

- Statement of mission and goals
- Legislation or legal frameworks covering the EQAA
- Manual of Operations indicating processes and procedures
- Policy Statements, e.g., conflict of interest issues
- Audited Financial Statements
- Address of website and types of information provided
- Development or Strategic Plan of EQAA

## **2. Principles of External Quality Assurance - Standards and Processes**

External quality assurance processes serve as the core activity of the quality assurance agency. In these processes and activities, the interests of students, employers and the society are taken into consideration. The following statements further demonstrate the systematic approach embarked by quality assurance agencies towards the development of agency standards and criteria, thereby achieving their goals and objectives.

- 2.1. Interest of students and the society should be at the forefront of external quality assurance processes.
- 2.2. Standards must be comparable to international good practices and related to internal quality assurance of higher education institutions.
- 2.3. Development of standards must involve participation of relevant stakeholders to meeting the current needs and demands.
- 2.4. Standards must be made publicly available and applied consistently and with due regard for cultural diversity.
- 2.5. The process normally includes a self-assessment report (SAR) of the programme or institution, site visits, feedback, formal decisions and follow up procedures.
- 2.6. Assessment must be objective, fair, transparent and conducted within an appropriate time frame.
- 2.7. The EQA provides appropriate training at regular interval for the development of assessors.
- 2.8. The EQA ensures professionalism and ethical conduct of assessors.

- 2.9. Quality assurance activities and processes are assessed on a cyclical basis to promote continuous improvement.
- 2.10. An appeal mechanism is established and accessible to all.

Examples of Supporting Evidence:

- Policy statements and practices on student protection and social interests. Document or record providing manifestation of the protection of student and social interests.
- Make available quality assurance codes/manual and standards, guidelines, or instrument for evaluation
- Evidence of benchmarking and referencing with international standards and good practices.
- Evidence of dialogues and communication with stakeholders.
- Availability of social media for effective communication and dissemination with the public.
- Evaluation and review of self-assessment report of institutions by the agency.
- Evidence of selection policies, duties, responsibilities and development of staff and assessors i.e. training requirements.
- Code of conduct and ethics for reviewers
- Description of cyclical validity and follow up measures.
- Policy and procedure for appeals.

### **3. Principles of Institutional Quality Assurance**

A fundamental principle in quality assurance of higher education is that quality primarily rests with the higher education institutions themselves. The statements which follow define the role of the higher education institutions in developing, sustaining, enhancing and assuring quality of higher education to their stakeholders. The statements provide guidelines on the quality assurance processes systems through which higher education institutions demonstrate their accountability and safeguard the interests of their stakeholders including students and society.

- 3.1. The institution has a primary responsibility for quality.
- 3.2. Quality assurance promotes the balance between institutional autonomy and public accountability.
- 3.3. Quality assurance is a participatory and cooperative process across all levels incorporating involvement of academic staff, students, and other stakeholders.
- 3.4. A quality culture underpins all institutional activities including teaching, learning, research, services and management.

- 3.5. A structured and functional internal quality assurance system with clearly defined responsibilities is established.
- 3.6. The quality system is promulgated and supported by the top management to ensure effective implementation and sustainability.
- 3.7. Sufficient resources for establishing and maintaining an effective quality system within the institution should be provided.
- 3.8. The institution should have formal mechanisms for approval, periodic review and monitoring of programmes and awards.
- 3.9. Quality is regularly monitored and reviewed for purposes of continuous improvement at all levels.
- 3.10. Relevant and current information about the institution, its programmes, achievements, and quality processes is accessible to public.

Examples of Supporting Evidence:

- Statement of vision and mission of the institution;
- Documented policies and strategic action plans;
- Organizational and management structure;
- Resources for teaching, research and services;
- Information of the institution made available to the public;
- Adequacy of facilities and infrastructure to support teaching, research and services;
- Establishment of quality assurance unit and resources;
- Internal quality assurance systems [eg. curriculum development / improvement procedures, evidence of programmes specifications];
- Documented information of responsibilities of faculties, schools, departments and other organizational units and individuals in quality assurance;
- Feedback from stakeholders;
- Report of internal quality assurance activities including reviews and improvement of internal quality assurance system of the institutions.

#### **4. Principles of National Qualifications Framework**

NQFs have turned into key instruments for the reform of education and training, and qualification systems in many ASEAN countries and beyond. The Framework may be a unified and comprehensive or linked and sectoral based. The emphasis on learning outcomes is to ensure that the learning takes place effectively through variety of strategies amongst others-teaching and learning, research, and other activities.

Increasingly, lifelong learning policies have been embedded into the NQF-primarily by addressing the flexibility in the educational pathways, recognizing informal and non-

formal learning within the national systems. It also addresses the barriers to access and progression in learning.

NQF is expected to facilitate the mobility of students, workers and professionals across the region and beyond. AMS are encouraged to align their NQF to regional frameworks as well as international good practices.

- 4.1. NQF facilitates the progressive nature of learning and training with the inclusion of recognition of prior learning.
- 4.2. NQF supports student and workforce mobility through recognition of qualifications, including lifelong learning.
- 4.3. NQF is based on learning outcomes that emphasize student-centered learning and student competencies.
- 4.4. NQF supports consistency, transparency and flexibility of learning pathways and progression.
- 4.5. NQF is generally defined by levels, descriptors and can be based on a credit system.
- 4.6. NQF must be supported by relevant national policies.
- 4.7. Stakeholders must be consulted and actively involved in the development and implementation of the NQF.
- 4.8. The implementation of the NQF is to be carried out by an authorized body and supported by a set of agreed quality assurance principles and standards.
- 4.9. NQF is dynamic and should be reviewed to meet the changing needs and developments.
- 4.10 NQF should be complemented by an authorized information center.

Examples of sources of evidence:

- NQF Planning reports
- Document on the Qualifications Framework
- Supporting laws and regulations
- Information on the responsible authorities
- Policies relating to the Framework

- Guidelines associated with the implementation
- The quality assurance system
- Notices for implementation
- Information centers such as a registry of accredited programmes
- Use of Diploma Supplement or other similar formal statements
- Consultation reports, reports on effectiveness of NQF

The AQAF is an inspirational document developed indigenously, underpinning ASEAN values, expectations, and good practices for quality assurance, linking both EQA and IQA as well as qualifications framework. AQAF is intended to benefit all EQA bodies and institutions across ASEAN member countries. The approach overall is developmental oriented to address different need of EQAAs.

AQAN and its partners (SEAMEO RIHED and AUN) encourage its members to make use of AQAF as a tool for improvement and harmonization of the quality assurance system at the national level. The national EQA bodies should strive to align their QA and QF systems to AQAF in due course. It is a key function of AQAN, through its advisory role and capacity building activities, to assist its members to align their quality assurance and qualification system with the AQAF principles.

### **AQAN TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

An AQAN Advisory Technical Committee (ATAC) will be appointed by the Executive Committee and shall serve for three years. The functions of the Committee are:

- to provide detailed guidelines to process application for referencing
- to facilitate and advise referencing
- to provide technical support / consultations
- to provide capacity building
- to monitor and to report AQAF related activities to the Executive Committee
- to review periodically (every 3 years) and make recommendations for improvements to AQAN

Composition of ATAC:

- technical experts in QA and / or QF (no more than 5 persons)
- holds senior position in EQAA bodies within ASEAN
- at least 10 years of experiences in QA and /or QF

## REFERENCING GUIDELINES

### A. REFERENCING PROCESS

1. The AQAN members initiating an AQAF self-referencing process will inform AQAN Executive Committee of its intention to conduct referencing to AQAF.

*Note: A guideline for referencing and review of agency is being developed.*

2. The member country is generally expected to prepare SAR to indicate the extent of alignment in terms of their establishment, QA systems and practices. It is advisable for them to use an internal audit panel to prepare the SAR.
3. The SAR is then submitted to the AQAN Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) for their review and feedback. ATAC may conduct site visits to the EQAA for verifications of the SAR.
4. ATAC may do follow up visits.
5. ATAC submits its report to the AQAN Executive Committee for deliberation.

### B. SCOPE OF REFERENCING

1. Referencing or alignment of national quality assurance systems to regional frameworks generally include principles on establishment of EQA, QA policies, standards and processes of EQA as well as IQA components.
2. AQAF represents a comprehensive and wholesome quality assurance reference framework. It is composed of 4 sets of principles which include external quality assurance agency, external quality assurance standards and processes, institutional quality assurance and national qualifications framework; and in addition it must also incorporate principles relating to qualifications and the national qualifications framework.

3. EQAAs should endeavor to do referencing to AQAF as a whole. However, it is acceptable to reference with Principle 1, 2 and 3 especially in the absence of a NQF or where NQF is not the direct responsibilities of the EQAA. The effective QA systems require clear interplay or link between EQA and IQA in assuring quality of programmes and institutions.

## INTERPRETATION AND GUIDANCE NOTES OF AQAF

As the name suggests, the purpose of the Interpretation and Guidance Notes is to assist users in understanding the scope of the principles in the Quadrants and to explain the meaning of some of the terms used.

The explanation and examples given in respect of a principle are not intended to be exhaustive. EQAAs may choose to assess their organisation and operations against these principles for their own specific purposes assisted by this Guidance Notes and develop their own check lists. Where an EQAA has applied for a formal review, it is expected expound the higher education landscape in which it provides its services, and provide some analysis and reflections on its strength and weakness in relation to the AQAF principles adding any current or future plans that it may have.

### Quadrant 1 : The External Quality Assurance Agency

This component explains the basic requirement for an appropriate and legally established external body mandated and dedicated to conduct quality assurance. The mission and goals of the EQAA must clearly indicate its mandate to provide quality assurance and to ensure the quality of higher education. However, if it is the case that EQAA's position is affected or constrained by national systems or any other factors, these must be explained. These Principles remain the key reference points for an appropriately established competent EQAA.

Quadrant 1: The External Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA)		Guidance notes/interpretation	Examples of Evidences
1.1	The EQAA in the ASEAN countries have mission and common goals/statements	The mission and goals of this body provides a clear mandate regarding its roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Published mission and goals</li> <li>Public reports of</li> </ul>

		EQAA's mission and goals are developed with, and approved by key stakeholders	EQAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal document which provide the mandate (if any)</li> </ul>
1.2	The EQAA has an established legal basis and is formally recognized and trusted by competent public authorities in its home country.	<p>Legal basis for the formation of EQAA provides the authority to set up and conduct external quality assurance activities. It may be a statutory body or unit of a ministry through an Act of Parliament, Cabinet decree, Presidential decree or its equivalent.</p> <p>Competent public authorities (ministries, agencies, recognition bodies, employers), work with, rely on and recognize the decisions made by the EQAA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation or legal framework</li> <li>• Governmental authority</li> <li>• A unit in Ministry</li> <li>• Decrees</li> <li>• Policy papers</li> </ul>
1.3	The EQAA has autonomous responsibility for its operations and its decision making processes and judgments are free from undue	It is important for the EQAA to show its independence and autonomy to develop its systems, procedures and methods. Its decision making process is free from outside influence and is entirely the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation</li> <li>• Government Policy statements</li> <li>• Internal system, standards and decision making</li> </ul>

	influences.	responsibility of the EQAA. In the ASEAN context, however, it is often difficult to be operationally and financially independent. It is imperative, however, that the accreditation/ evaluation decisions are made by the EQAA themselves.	procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict of interest policies.</li> </ul>
1.4	The EQAA has a standard and transparent system for appointing or electing members of the Board.	There are selection or election criteria that guide the EQAA in the appointment or election of its Board members. The appointment or election of Board members is announced to the public.  There should be a good and appropriate balance of stakeholders' representation in the Board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation &amp; regulation</li> <li>• Rules for Nomination and Election, if applicable</li> <li>• Public announcement of members appointed or elected</li> <li>• Information pertaining to Board members</li> </ul>
1.5	The EQAA's policies and management practices are based on good governance, transparency and accountability.	The EQAA has management structures, e.g. the Board, Executive Committees, and appropriately qualified staff for all positions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manual for Operations</li> <li>• Standard Operating Procedures</li> <li>• Strategic Plans</li> </ul>

		<p>There are operational manuals/guidelines, QA processes and procedures which are made available to the public. These indicate transparency.</p> <p>Accountability to authorities and stakeholders should be indicated. Its financial system and performance should be transparent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance and Financial Reports</li> </ul>
1.6	<p>The EQAA keeps abreast with new developments and innovations in quality assurance as part of its internal continuous improvement system.</p>	<p>The EQAA provides relevant and effective policies and practices to keep up with the changes in higher education, teaching and learning, online and technology and new demands for improved services.</p> <p>Research is being done and feedbacks solicited. Presentations are made in various conferences. A continuous quality improvement process is embedded in its management system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publications</li> <li>• Research output</li> <li>• Seminars/ Conferences</li> <li>• Internal QA review system</li> <li>• Monitoring systems and reviews</li> </ul>

1.7	The EQAA has sufficient and adequate resources.	The resources must be sufficient to enable the EQAA to perform its functions, meet its goals in a timely manner and serve its stakeholders. The resources include appropriately qualified and sufficient manpower and their development, financial capacity to sustain its activities and future plans, including physical and IT infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on infrastructure and IT facilities.</li> <li>• Statistics on man power and qualifications.</li> <li>• Recruitment policy</li> <li>• Training policies and programmes</li> <li>• Planning system</li> </ul>
1.8.	The EQAA collaborates with key stakeholders, both nationally and internationally	<p>Collaboration at national levels with key stakeholders. e.g., students, institutions, employers, industry, and professional bodies, enables better understanding and support, of quality education and training and acceptance of the outcomes of QA work.</p> <p>At the international level, collaboration with QA partners enhances visibility, allows sharing of practices and resources and supports recognition of QA decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periodic dialogues with various stakeholders.</li> <li>• Existing Memorandum of Cooperation or Understanding.</li> <li>• Listing of activities, projects, internships and sharing of information</li> </ul>

		QA knowledge and practices are important in managing Transnational Education and Cross Border Higher Education.	
1.9	The EQAA has a reliable system for controlling, auditing and assessing all processes of its operations.	<p>A good internal management system addresses annual strategic planning, systemic checks, performance assessment, including outputs and outcomes .</p> <p>Plan-do-check-act (PDCA) practices</p> <p>EQAA are generally being audited financially by higher authorities through yearly performance reviews.</p> <p>Audits done by external QA bodies for separate certification and compliance with specific requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents on strategic planning and performance review</li> <li>• Documents on internal management system</li> <li>• Audited Financial Statements</li> <li>• Yearly performance review and report</li> <li>• Customers feedback</li> </ul>
1.10	The EQAA keeps the public informed of its current policies, procedures, criteria, standards and	The website/portal is kept up to date and accessible to the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular communication through various means- website, circulars, emails,</li> </ul>

	assessment results.	Timely issuance of circulars/notices, publications of QA documents, press release, and regular dialogues.	press release and social media <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dialogues</li><li>• Campaign</li></ul>
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## Quadrant 2: External Quality Assurance Standards and Processes

The core function and activity of the EQAA is the conduct of quality assurance processes and the establishment of policies, standards, procedures and outcomes. Some EQAAs adopt their country's National Standards as minimum standards while others go beyond these standards. This quadrant focuses on how standards are developed, the role of stakeholders, key processes undertaken, transparency and fairness. The model being used reflects the national needs and aspirations.

Quadrant 2: EQA Standards and Processes		Guidance notes/interpretation	Examples of Evidences
2.1	Interest of the students and society should be at the forefront of external quality assurance processes.	The purpose and goals of the EQAA is to benefit both students and society. The declared purpose of QA therefore should be supported by QA frameworks and processes that provide the means to benefit both parties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission, objectives and goals</li> <li>• Policy intent statements</li> <li>• Student focus and protection scheme</li> </ul>
2.2	Standards must be comparable to international good practices and related to internal quality assurance of higher education institutions.	<p>Development and selection of standards involve stakeholders, experts and are benchmarked or referenced with international best practices.</p> <p>It must be fit for purpose.</p> <p>The Institutional IQA requirement is part of the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedure for developing standards.</li> <li>• Dialogues or consultation workshops.</li> <li>• Involvement of Industry</li> <li>• International advisors</li> </ul>

		EQA standards whether for programme-based or institutional- based approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidelines for institutional assessment</li> </ul>
2.3	Development of standards must involve participation of relevant stakeholders to meet the current needs and demands.	The standards must be relevant to local context, national priorities and capacities and the changing demands affecting higher education. How do the quality standards address this demand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document/records of periodic dialogues and consultation and/or</li> <li>Involvement of stakeholders such as the employers and industry, expert groups and institutions</li> <li>Feedback through social media</li> <li>Open consultation papers</li> </ul>
2.4	Standards must be made publicly available and applied consistently and with due regard for cultural diversity.	The EQA standards must be properly developed, approved and well disseminated.  Interpretation must be fit for purpose and consider its	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upload in EQAAs' portals, issue timely circulars/notices</li> <li>Set quality assurance framework,</li> </ul>

		context	<p>evaluation</p> <p>instrument,</p> <p>assessors</p> <p>training and monitoring,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment report feedback</li> </ul>
2.5	<p>The process normally includes a self-assessment report (SAR) of the programme or institution, site visit, feedback, formal decision, and follow-up procedures.</p>	<p>Outline the institutional process to produce a SAR in your country. This procedure is an accepted core process in QA practices – applicable for both programme and institutional accreditation.</p> <p>This requires institutions to have an internal system for quality assurance and conduct a proper audit to generate data and prepare a Report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manuals for Institutional and/or programme accreditation – SAR</li> <li>• Documents pertaining to Institutional IQA system</li> <li>• Sampling of Institution or programme being subjected to the process</li> <li>• Minutes of decision</li> <li>• Documentary evidence of follow-up /post visit reports</li> </ul>

2.6	Assessment must be objective, fair, and transparent and conducted within an appropriate time frame.	EQAA must have assessment standards and procedures which have been well disseminated. Assessment reports or templates are conveyed to institutions for feedback. Assessment should be carried out within a reasonable timeline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manual/ Code of Practice for Institutional or Programme Assessments.</li> <li>• Documents or sampling of process.</li> <li>• Records of feedback from interviews for institutions and other related parties</li> <li>• Periodic review and analysis of assessment reports.</li> </ul>
2.7	The EQAA provides appropriate training at regular interval for development of assessors.	Assessors are seen to be the backbone of QA systems. Normally they are external peer experts and trained by the EQAA. The EQAA has specific criteria and training activities to oversee the quality of the reports and performance of its assessors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection criteria and practice</li> <li>• Up to date training modules</li> </ul>

2.8	The EQAA ensures professionalism and ethical conduct of assessors.	Training should include professionalism and ethical matters. It may be useful to have a system to check and act on grievance issues and complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback mechanism from institutions and assessors</li> <li>• Code of Ethics</li> <li>• Complaint procedures and responses</li> </ul>
2.9	Quality assurance activities and processes are assessed on a cyclical basis to promote continuous improvement.	<p>The EQAA should have a policy on the review of its QA standards and systems to keep its approach relevant and effective.</p> <p>There may be fixed cyclical reviews on issues arising from time to time.</p> <p>Feedback from stakeholders serve as an important basis for reviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Performance Report</li> <li>• Reports on reviews, findings and actions taken</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Feedback form stakeholders</li> </ul>
2.10	An appeal mechanism is established and accessible to all.	<p>EQAA should provide appropriate appeal mechanisms, policies and procedures which are disseminated publicly.</p> <p>There are protocols to follow for appeals pertaining to decisions made by the EQAA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document on appeals system and procedures</li> <li>• Records of appeal and outcomes</li> </ul>

### Quadrant 3: Internal Quality Assurance (Institutions)

The Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system is important for continuous quality improvement and effective performance of institutions. It has almost become a mandatory standard in many EQAAs' quality assurance standards. It reflects the close linkage between external quality assurance and internal quality assurance of institutions. Quadrant 3 requires institutions to develop their own policies and internal quality assurance systems and processes for accountability, transparency and achievement/improvements.

The stage of development of IQA systems in AMS vary from one country to another and therefore the Principles expressed here should be used as guides to develop their systems. For those with existing IQAs, this section can be used as a benchmark. AQAF does not prescribe a specific model, but it is important that generally that IQA is a component of the institutional Internal Quality Management System.

Quadrant 3: Internal Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institutions		Guidance notes/interpretation	Samples of Evidences
3.1	The institution has a primary responsibility for quality	<p>It is expected that institutions take full responsibility to develop and implement systems and processes to ensure the quality of learning and other activities. Such commitment ought to be expressed in their policy and strategic statements.</p> <p>The EQAA has been established to ensure this</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision and mission statements</li> <li>• Policies, strategies, plans and resources</li> <li>• An internal quality management system which features IQA</li> <li>• A structure within the</li> </ul>

		institutional responsibility is undertaken effectively by institutions.	organization to ensure implementation and monitoring for improvement
3.2	Quality assurance promotes the balance between institutional autonomy and public accountability	Higher education is seen as a public good, especially in the light of developing nations such as those found in ASEAN. Both EQA and IQA systems should strive to strike a balance between institutional autonomy and accountability. Institutions should ensure a fair balance between their needs and the needs of the society and demonstrate that their governance systems, policies and strategies to manage academic autonomy and academic quality, research and services are in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational and management structure</li> <li>• Appropriate governance for academic and non- academic responsibilities.</li> <li>• Regulations and codes of ethic</li> </ul>
3.3	Quality assurance is a participatory and cooperative process across	The role of various parties –top, middle management and support staff,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IQA events to orient and educate internal</li> </ul>

	<p>all levels incorporating involvement of academic staff, students, and other stakeholders</p>	<p>academics and students should be identified.</p> <p>Quality assurance is a shared responsibility and inputs and feedback should come from various stakeholders to foster quality in the institution.</p> <p>Commitment to regularly structured engagement with all internal clients and stakeholders is likely to impact on institutional activities.</p> <p>Stakeholders external to the institution include alumni, government agencies, employers, and industry and professional bodies.</p>	<p>management, staff and students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documented policies and responsibilities of all parties which have been disseminated to various sectors.</li> <li>• Outcomes of dialogues and inputs from various parties.</li> <li>• Events organized for specific stakeholders.</li> </ul>
3.4	<p>A quality culture underpins all institutional activities including teaching, learning research, services and management</p>	<p>How does institutional quality culture evolve in an institution?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicators of quality within the institution.</li> </ul>

3.5	<p>A structured and functional internal quality assurance system with clearly defined responsibilities is established</p>	<p>It is expected that institutions will create an internal quality assurance system, a function assigned to specific unit or body to ensure the IQA system works reasonably within the wider institutional management system.</p> <p>There is evidence of sufficient resources to support IQA activities, both human and financial.</p> <p>It is expected that the IQA unit is linked closely to departments, faculties and other service centres to oversee their system's effectiveness. These other centres are also expected to be involved in IQA at their level.</p> <p>IQA generally includes the responsibilities of the unit/faculties, systems for teaching, learning and assessments and learning outcomes. The scope of the IQA and the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents of establishment of IQA Unit</li> <li>• Documents of quality management /assurance manual and practices</li> <li>• Resources for IQA</li> <li>• Record of activities undertaken by IQA</li> </ul>
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		<p>responsible parties should be determined by the institution.</p> <p>Guidelines on how to set up an IQ system are available for reference</p>	
3.6	<p>The quality system is promulgated and supported by the top management to ensure effective implementation and sustainability</p>	<p>The quality of the institution is envisioned through the strategic intent of institutions. Thus top management commitment is crucial to the effective implementation and sustainability of IQA systems.</p> <p>Top management engages all levels of staff to promote understanding and acceptance, provide adequate resources, and have regular assessment and feedback mechanisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings/ documentation of activities, records</li> <li>• Successful and effective implementation of IQA records</li> <li>• Improvement undertaken which enhances the institution</li> </ul>
3.7	<p>Sufficient resources for establishing and maintaining an effective quality system within the institution should be</p>	<p>Identify resources required to establish and maintain the IQA system. Depending on the model chosen, the unit must be well-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment /launching of an IQA Structure or Unit</li> </ul>

	provided	organized and adequately staffed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization arrangement and position, competent manpower, training, funding and IT and other infrastructures.</li> </ul>
3.8	The institution should have formal mechanisms for approval , periodical reviews and monitoring of programmes and awards	This principle strictly addresses the need for formal systems to ensure quality. This requirement is considered at the planning, developing and monitoring phases as well at the delivery stage. It will help ensure that their programmes are well designed, relevant, current and up to date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved documented policy system for programme development, approval and review.</li> <li>• Records of development and reviews for the improvement of programmes</li> <li>• Feedback from stakeholders.</li> </ul>
3.9	Quality is regularly monitored and reviewed for purposes of continuous improvement at all level.	The institution has existing policies on monitoring the IQA system and processes for continuous quality improvement. Usually,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies on monitoring and review of the IQA system and procedures.</li> </ul>

		there is a unit or department in charge of QA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring reports, findings and actions taken.</li> </ul>
3.10	Relevant and current information about the institution, its programmes, achievements, and quality processes is accessible to public.	The institution has a website which contains information about its programs, activities and achievements, including QA mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website, Circulars, Newsletters, Promotional materials</li> </ul>

#### Quadrant 4: National Qualifications Framework

NQF generally provides the national classification and standards for qualifications in the higher education sector or as a comprehensive framework. It reflects the progressive complexity of learning, promotes learning outcomes, credits, and establishes a learner centric approach in teaching and learning and beyond that supports lifelong learning. It is noted that NQFs have been developed in many AMS to enhance their higher education sector and graduates. It has become increasingly important, especially with the development of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRf) which supports an ASEAN Agenda facilitating the mobility of persons, integration and harmonization.

Generally, underpinning the NQF is an effective EQA system managed by a competent recognized body that quality assures the qualifications for purposes of building and sustaining confidence and recognition. However not all EQAA are fully responsible for NQFs. Therefore it is advisable for the EQAA to advise their role in relation to NQFs, if any

Quadrant 4: NQF		Guidance notes/interpretation	Samples of Evidences
4.1	NQF facilitates the progressive nature of learning and training with the inclusion of recognition of prior learning.	4-1 to 4.7 reflects the key common objectives and purposes generally found in National Qualifications Frameworks  These items are also provided in AQRf.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NQF policy statements</li> <li>APEL/RPL development and initiatives</li> </ul>
4.2	NQF supports student and workforce mobility through recognition of qualifications, including lifelong		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lifelong learning policies and initiatives</li> </ul>

	learning.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credit transfers system</li> </ul>
4.3	NQF n is based on learning outcomes that emphasize student-centered learning and student competencies.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement of learning outcomes and Levels outcomes descriptors</li> <li>• Teaching and Learning approaches</li> </ul>
4.4	NQF supports consistency, transparency and flexibility of learning pathways and progression.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and mechanisms for pathways.</li> </ul>
4.5	NQF is generally defined by levels, descriptors, and can be based on a credit system.	The common features of NQF which are important revolve on a student-centred approach and continuous progression in education. The learning outcomes and credits are key indicators in the comparability of qualifications, student mobility and recognition for various purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level descriptors</li> <li>• Nomenclatures</li> <li>• Credit system</li> </ul>

4.6	NQF must be supported by relevant national policies	To operationalise or bring life and meaning to NQF, there must be policies and systems to enable its effective implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National policies and strategies</li> </ul>
4.7	Stakeholders must be consulted and actively involved in the development and implementation of the NQF.	Self-explanatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Records of consultations and participation of stakeholders discussion at the development, implementation and review of NQF. May be at institutional levels as well</li> </ul>
4.8	The implementation of the NQF is to be carried out by an authorized body and supported by a set of agreed quality assurance principles and standards.	<p>There must be a body entrusted to be responsible for the NQF. However it is not necessary to be the responsibility of the EQAA. EQAA may be given the task to ensure its implementation within institutions.</p> <p>The QA system ensures that the NQF requirements are complied with. Here lies the connection to Principles 1, 2 and 3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laws or equivalent evidence of establishment of authorized body responsible for NQF.</li> <li>Written evidence of implementation</li> </ul>

			n policies and mechanisms.
4.9	NQF is dynamic and should be reviewed to meet the changing needs and developments.	Policy and actions on periodic reviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Records of review and consultations and improvement</li> </ul>
4.10	NQF should be complemented by an authorized information centre.	<p>The outcomes of EQA of programme and institutions should be available to the public through reports and decisions of accreditation or audit. Often there is a need to create a register or upload to portals of EQAA or the Ministry. There should be updated and accurate information to advise and protect the public.</p> <p>Institutions may introduce Diploma Supplement or equivalent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of proper accurate information provided /accessible to the public-website/portal</li> </ul>