

Review of the current external quality assurance system in Georgia

Presentation of main findings

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Aim: to review the current Georgian quality assurance system, via desk based analysis and a study visit which included stakeholder meetings (2-3 June 2014)

General Observations

- NCEQE by and large **complies with the ESG.**
- **Student involvement seems to be weak**
- Peculiar feature: **public hearing** of applicant universities
- **Link between internal QA and external QA unclear**
- **Role of NCEQE seems to be unclear**
- **No shared understanding**/interpretation of roles and standards
- **A more enhancement-led approach needs to be thought through!** Purpose needs to be defined, procedures and tools need to be adapted!

Findings according to the Terms of Reference

ToR item 1: The QA process and especially the final decisions need to be focused in improvement...

- **Enhancement orientation is recommendable**, but implies a significant shift of purpose of the whole system
- **Purpose needs to be communicated**
- All components of the current system (annual reports etc.) need to be taken into account
- Design of process needs to be adapted accordingly and should include follow-up
- **Recommendations should be a regular feature of QA reports**
- Conditional accreditation makes sense, since it supports the developmental approach

ToR item 2: QA standards have to foster a results-based evaluation as opposed to the input-based assessment

- Add evaluation of qualification level of graduates and of their success on labor market to the accreditation criteria.
- Mind the timing of the accreditation!
- Mind the alignment with the enhancement oriented approach!

ToR item 3: The quality of the reports needs to be improved and a plausible mechanism for the institutions to appeal the decisions of the council has to be in place

- Quality of reports is crucial!
- Guidance about the structure, content and style of reports is key. Templates might be used! Training is key!
- Mind the primary addressees in terms of content, style etc.

ToR item 3 (cont.): *The quality of the reports needs to be improved and a plausible mechanism for the institutions to appeal the decisions of the council has to be in place*

- In case the law cannot be changed to allow for an appeals system, the agency should set up an internal (not legally determined) appeals system
- Timeframe for authorization/accreditation needs to be extended.
- Waiting-period before re-application might be considered

ToR item 4: *Certain level of consistency has to be ensured within the interpretation of the standards from one peer reviewer to the other as well as among the council members and the peer reviewers*

- Consistency is key for the credibility of the agency
- Official documentation on the interpretation of core terms and standards
- Trainings and joint meetings for all parties involved
- List of precedents is helpful

ToR item 5: *In order to ensure impartiality of the QA process, the chances of biased evaluations must be decreased. The participation of the local academic community needs to be minimized in order to curb possible nepotism.*

- Again: Shared understanding of standards and regulations is key; Appointing foreign experts is not enough!
- Need for effective no conflict of interest policy
- Foreign experts need specific training in order to familiarize them with the system, especially if it has legal/ financial consequences

ToR item 6: *The fee formula of the accreditation/authorization procedure has to be adequate and take into account the specifics of different academic programs, or institutions*

Keep affordability of QA review fees!

A combination of coefficients such as the size of the institution (number of students or number of programmes) and the type of experts used could be meaningful for designing a fee formula

ToR item 7: A self-assessment report has to foster institutional development

Again: The purpose of all instruments need to be clarified
An annual report that has to only document compliance
can hardly foster institutional development

A self-assessment report based on self-analysis (not only description!) and received feedback(!) would be necessary instead

Thank you
We hope you deemed our feedback useful!

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