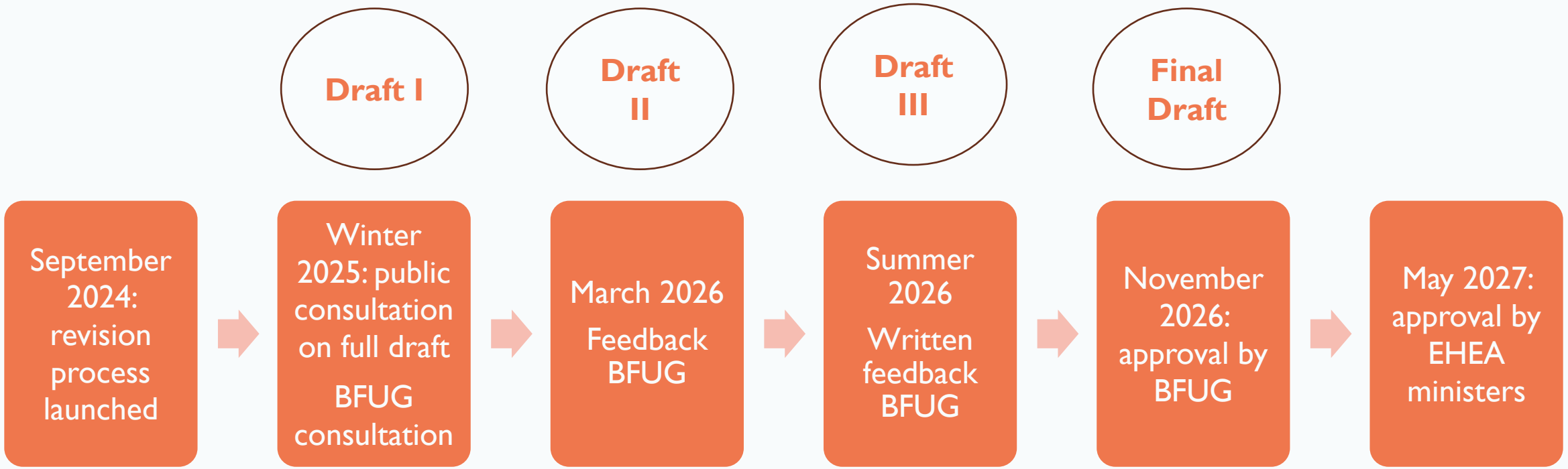
ESG AND EA REVISION

UPDATE NOVEMBER 2026

TPG C MEETING, 17-18 NOVEMBER 2026, ARMENIA

TIMELINE


Draft I
Draft II
Draft III
Final Draft
September 2024: revision process launched
Winter 2025: public consultation on full draft
BFUG consultation
March 2026
Feedback BFUG
Summer 2026
Written feedback BFUG
November 2026: approval by BFUG
May 2027: approval by EHEA ministers

REFLECTIONS ON THE REVISION PROCESS

- Overall appreciation from stakeholders on the process and developments
- Challenges in addressing feedback:
  - Too detailed vs suggestions for new additions
  - Keeping the focus vs adding new topics
  - Addressing issues already decided/directions agreed by the BFUG
  - Split views on some issues
- Process involves 6 stakeholder organisations and their members, EQAR, and the 47 EHEA ministries
- Key themes for the revision:
  - Clearer links with other institutional missions
  - Strong emphasis on stakeholder involvement
  - Address digitalisation and artificial intelligence
  - Make enhancement aspects more visible
  - Move some aspects from guidelines to standards
  - Address areas of unclarity and emerging issues
  - Remove unnecessary explanations

ESG 2015 to ESG 2027: ***evolution*** *not revolution!*

INTRODUCTION

This presentation focuses on standards (not guidelines) and gives a comparison with ESG 2015.

- Restructured to avoid overlaps and to address, in logical order, the concepts of quality, quality assurance, as well as the goals, scope, purposes, and principles of the ESG
- Context updated to reflect the changes in higher education systems over the last ten years including green and digital transitions (including AI)
- Emphasised the need to promote the social dimension and the fundamental values of higher education, as part of quality education
- Focus remains on L&T, but societal engagement was added as an area to be considered as linked (in addition to research)
- Purposes: new one on supporting stakeholders in continuously monitoring and enhancing education, and facilitating international cooperation was made explicit
- New wording to explain the scope of EQA activities that come under the ESG: 'those that concern learning and teaching in higher education institutions or programmes that aim to assess quality dimensions defined in the ESG Part 1' (to be read together with text in standard 3.1)
- Addition of glossary with key terms

PART 1: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (2015)	PART 1: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (2027)
1.1 POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE	1.1 POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
1.2 DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES	1.2 DESIGN, APPROVAL, ONGOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES
1.3 STUDENT CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT	1.3 STUDENT CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT
1.4 STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION	1.4 STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION
1.5 TEACHING STAFF	1.5 TEACHING STAFF
1.6 LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT	1.6 LEARNING ENVIROMENT AND RESOURCES
1.7 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	1.7 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
1.8 PUBLIC INFORMATION	1.8 PUBLIC INFORMATION
1.9 ON-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES	
1.10 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE	1.9 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

PART 1

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

- Added that the quality assurance policy should support a coherent system and lead to continuous improvement
- Further emphasis on involvement of and communication with stakeholders

1.2 Design, approval, ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

- Merged with former 1.9 (monitoring and review)
- Design, approval, ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes should ensure coherence, consider latest research, academic and professional developments
- Additions to support employability (professional and disciplinary standards and response to labour market requirements) and active citizenship

PART I

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

- Reinforced to better express the need to support students to actively take part in SCL
- New reference to AI 'The use of digital tools, including artificial intelligence, in learning, teaching and assessment should be responsible, transparent, human-centred and subject to human verification.'

1.5 Teaching staff

- Scope of standard extended to "all staff involved in education delivery"
- Addition of the need to have an appropriate share of core staff under long-term employment

1.6 Learning environment and resources

- Standard name and scope expanded to cover whole learning environment, including digital and physical infrastructure

PART I

1.7 Information management

- Clarified that information collection refers to 'programmes and other related activities' (not all institutional activities) and that information should be up-to-date and reliable

1.8 Public information

- Scope of standard expanded to include relevant outcomes of QA processes

1.9 Cyclical external quality assurance

- New requirement to address, where relevant, the outcomes of the previous review
- Emphasised that institutions should ensure that the external quality assurance procedures they undergo meet applicable regulatory requirements, especially for CBQA

PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (2015)
2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES 2.6 REPORTING 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (2027)
2.1 ADDRESSING INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES 2.4 PEER REVIEWERS 2.5 REPORTING 2.6 PROCESSES AND CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

PART 2

2.1 Addressing internal quality assurance

- Addition of holistic approach: 'all standards of Part 1 of the ESG are covered holistically for each institution, by one or more external quality assurance process(es) by the agency.'
- Addition that agencies should check that HEIs have approaches to check correspondence of programme with the right cycle of QF-EHEA

2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

- Emphasis on the 'dual purpose of accountability and enhancement' and that the relevant legal and regulatory context for higher education should be considered in design of EQA methodologies

PART 2

2.3 Implementing processes

- Explicit description of site visit as ‘in-person by peer reviewers including stakeholder interviews’
- Additional clarification that processes need to be consistent nationally and across borders
- New reference to AI (mirroring 1.3)

2.4 Peer reviewers

- Peer reviewers should be selected considering the aims of the review process and should have appropriate training and preparation
- Requirement for peer reviewers to contribute in individual capacity (moved from former 3.3 guidelines)

PART 2

2.5 Reporting

- Inclusion of requirements that reports should be useful, include recommendations, and institutions should have the opportunity to verify for factual accuracy

2.6 Processes and criteria for outcomes

- Standard explicitly covers the process to reach outcomes
- Agencies should provide transparent information on if and how outcomes of EQA may be recognised by relevant authorities (moved from former 3.2)
- New requirement that 'If the decision-making relies on additional evidence, assessment or recommendation beyond the review report, this should be published together with the decision.'

2.7 Appeals and complaints

- Additioan that appeals should be considered by a different structure within the agency

PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES (2015)

3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS
3.3 INDEPENDENCE
3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS
3.5 RESOURCES
3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES (2027)

3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

3.2 INDEPENDENCE
3.3 ACTIVITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT
3.4 RESOURCES
3.5 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND INTEGRITY
3.6 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

PART 3

3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

- The need to make a clear distinction of the activities that are not in the scope of the ESG was moved to the standard and clarified: 'When the agencies also carry out activities that are not in the scope of the ESG, they should clearly define these activities and ensure a transparent distinction between external quality assurance and other fields of work. This needs to be clearly communicated to the wider public.'

(former 3.2 Official Status)

- Standard official status deleted and relevant points covered elsewhere, including in 2.6

3.2 Independence

- The three dimensions of independence were added to the standard with a brief description
- Requirement to avoid undue influence extended to cover any stakeholder, entity, or individual

PART 3

3.3 Enhancement activities

- Former standard on thematic analysis broadened to cover wider range of activities, reflection, analyses and dissemination of materials to support enhancement

3.4 Resources

- Addition that resources should support effective and sustainable implementation of agency activities
- Inclusion of need to provide professional development opportunities for staff, including on the use of digital technologies

PART 3

3.5 Internal quality assurance and integrity

- Clarification that the internal quality policy should be published
- Addition integrity aspects to the standard: the need for high professional standards, acting with transparency, effective tools to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure integrity both national and internationally

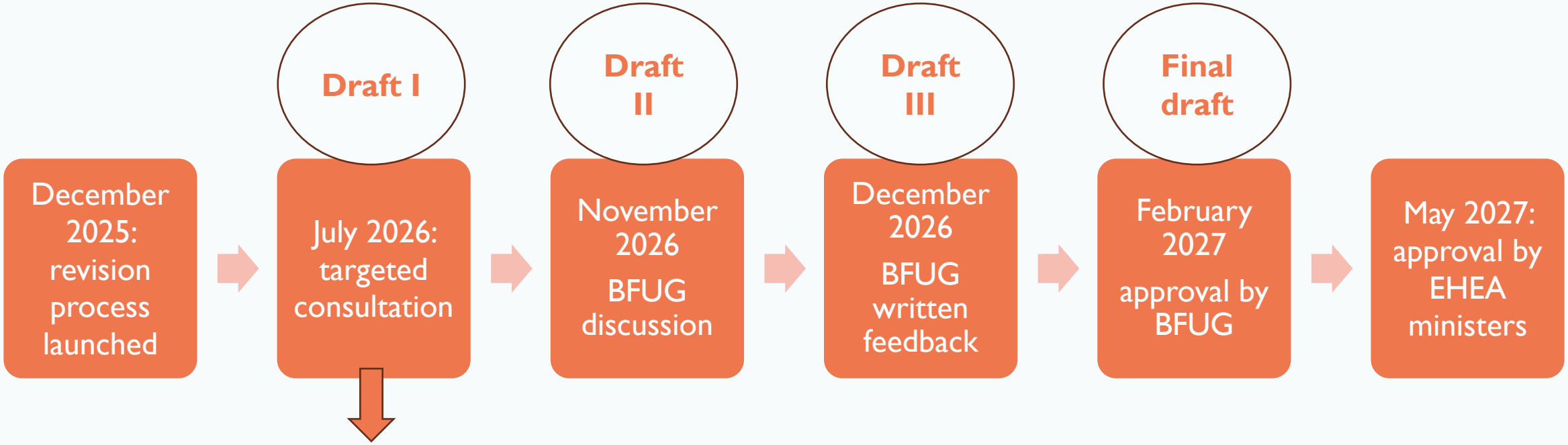
3.6 Cyclical external review of agencies

- Addition of requirement to address, where relevant, the outcomes of the previous review (mirroring standard 1.9)

WHAT NOW?

- Ministerial adoption at ministerial conference 26-27 May 2027, plus side event on ESG on 25 May 2027
- Transition policies from ENQA and EQAR published earlier in 2026
- Dissemination event in autumn 2027 in Brussels
- ENQA training for agencies and experts

REVISION OF EUROPEAN APPROACH



- Comments from European Commission
- Feedback from students
- Consultation with QA agencies that use the EA
- Consultation with HEIs that offer joint programmes
- Consultation with national authorities at EQAR Members' Dialogue

GENERAL CHANGES

This presentation focuses gives an overview of changes compared to the 2015 version, with the latest proposals of the Steering Committee marked in red

- Updated introduction to reflect latest developments in policy context
- Updated all standards to be in line with changes to the ESG
- Additional emphasis on 'jointness' of programmes
- Some standards reorganised/combined for logic and to reduce overlaps
- Addition of glossary

SCOPE, CONTEXT AND APPLICABILITY

- Clarification of requirements from consortia with institutions both from EHEA and from outside the EHEA
- Three key methodological principles are outlined: external QA conducted by an EQAR-registered agency, no additional national criteria to be added, the European Approach is to be applied holistically (standards and procedure) for external QA
- Clarified that the decision resulting from the process should be accepted in all relevant systems without additional criterial or requirements imposed on the programme
- Clarified the possibility of use in internal QA by "self-accrediting" institutions

PART B1. ELIGIBILITY FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE EA

- Eligibility section with three requirements to be checked by the agency before an EA procedure can start
  - Status of the institutions
  - Volume of study (including alignment with QF-EHEA cycles and the ECTS Users' Guide)
  - Existence of consortium agreement and key elements within it

PART B2. STANDARDS FOR QA OF JOINT PROGRAMMES IN THE EHEA

- Expanded standard "Joint Ownership and Responsibility", stating more precisely which elements of the programme need to be joint if the programme is to fulfil its character of a joint programme
- New standard "Learning Outcomes" combines elements of four standards in the 2015 version: level, disciplinary field, achievement, and regulated professions
- New standard "Credits and Workload" merges two standards from the 2015 version and includes requirement for workload to be aligned with the ECTS allocation
- Standard on admission expanded into "Admission and Progression", and reworded to expand with expectations of joint policies and regulation on admission

PART B2. STANDARDS FOR QA OF JOINT PROGRAMMES IN THE EHEA

- Standard "Learning, Teaching and Assessment" modified to strengthen the notion of constructive alignment between intended learning outcomes, learning process design and assessment
- Standard "Student Support" emphasises the joint character and responsibility of providing students with relevant support
- Standard "Staff" expanded with expectations on employment status, professional capacities and training of staff involved in the joint programme
- Standard on "Learning environment" replaces the one on "Facilities" to align with ESG 2027
- Standard on quality assurance now includes references to engaging with and providing feedback to different stakeholders of the joint programme

PART C. PROCEDURE FOR EQA OF JOINT PROGRAMMES IN THE EHEA

- Standard "Review Report" now contains elements of standard "Reporting" to address overlaps in content
- Standard "Formal Outcomes and Decision" expanded with considerations on provision of information important for the decision's acceptance in different higher education systems
- Standard "Complaints and Appeals" replaces a standard only on appeals by adding elements on complaints
- Standard on reporting renamed into "Publication of Outcomes" and no longer deals with content of the reports, only with publication, including other evidence used in decision-making
- Standard on follow-up expanded with requirement that the agency is informed about and addresses changes which might influence compliance with the standards

WHAT NEXT?

- New version to BFUG on 19 November, deadline for feedback 14 December
- Tabled for BFUG approval at meeting on 18-19 February in Vilnius, Lithuania
- Ministerial adoption at ministerial conference 26-27 May 2027
- Dissemination and training, including a seminar on the European Approach in September 2027 in Spain

Stay in touch!

Sign up to receive
our quarterly newsletter:
https://www.enqa.eu/contact/#newsletter

Follow ENQA on social media:



enqa.