Key Considerations for Cross-Border Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

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Introduction

Cross-border quality assurance (CBQA) is defined as external quality assurance (QA) activities of a QA agency carried out in a country other than the one in which it is based or primarily operates. For higher education institutions, CBQA may be a voluntary process or part of the national external QA requirements. It offers benefits to higher education systems, QA agencies and higher education institutions, as further outlined.

Quality assurance plays an important role in establishing and maintaining trust within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and CBQA has gained increasing importance, reflecting the internationalisation of higher education, the expansion of joint and transnational provision, and the emergence of new cooperative models such as European Universities Alliances.

The Bologna Process has provided the common framework for such cooperation in Europe. Building on the key commitment of quality assurance in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)[1] Ministers have repeatedly supported CBQA as a means to facilitate international cooperation and recognition of qualifications. The relevant commitments from the ministerial communiqués are set out in the box below.

Firstly, the aim that EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies would be recognised across the entire EHEA, and that higher education institutions would be free to choose any registered agency to work with, was established through the London Ministerial Communiqué (2007). In this regard, EQAR was conceived from the start in 2008 by the Ministers as a tool to encourage and facilitate the provision of quality assurance across borders.

The Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué (May 2012) then further emphasised the aim to ''*allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements*'', thereby enhancing the recognition of degrees and qualifications and avoiding duplication, particularly for the external quality assurance of joint degree programmes.

Next and in particular in the Yerevan Ministerial Communiqué (2015), CBQA has become a political priority, as ministers in charge of higher education in the EHEA reaffirmed their commitment to allowing ''*higher education institutions to use a suitable EQAR registered agency for their external quality assurance process, respecting the national arrangements for the decision making on quality assurance outcomes*''. In addition, the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes was adopted in Yerevan.

In Rome in 2020, the ministers committed to the further development of quality assurance systems by 1) removing the remaining obstacles, including those related to the cross-border

[1] Available here: [to be added]

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operation of the agencies registered in EQAR and 2) applying the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

Through shared frameworks, standards, tools and mechanisms, such as the ESG, the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes[2], the ECTS, QF-EHEA and EQAR, the Bologna Process has strengthened compatibility between national QA systems and contributed to an increase in cross-border exchanges and cooperation in higher education. In parallel, the Council Recommendation of 12 May 2025 on a European Quality Assurance and Recognition System and the launch of the joint European degree label in 2026 have further reinforced the use of these tools in EU Member States. The synergy between the work of the Bologna Process and the European Commission is reflected in the Tirana Communiqué (2024): *"We take note of the European Commission's Communication on a blueprint for a European Degree and look forward to exploring synergies with the EHEA."*

CBQA in the EHEA is firmly grounded in the ESG, which provides the common framework for internal and external quality assurance and underpins the work of all EQAR-registered agencies. Compliance with the ESG provides a common framework for CBQA activities to meet the agreed standards while allowing for adaptation to different national contexts. This compliance is externally verified through cyclical external reviews. Credibility, comparability and trust across borders is further supported through information provision (such as EQAR's Knowledge Base[3]), thematic analyses, peer learning activities, and EQAR and ENQA's monitoring and complaints mechanisms.

Key Considerations for Cross-Border Quality Assurance in the EHEA

In 2017, the E4 Group[4] and EQAR published the Key Considerations for Cross-Border Quality Assurance in the EHEA, with a view to guiding higher education institutions, QA agencies and other stakeholders engaging in CBQA.

The document remains relevant in both its rationale and purpose. However, the landscape of cross-border education and quality assurance has continued to evolve and has become increasingly complex, calling for a renewed and more operational articulation of shared principles to foster implementation. In parallel, progress towards the full implementation of the Bologna Process commitment on CBQA has remained uneven. Eligibility conditions and procedural requirements continue to vary significantly across countries.

[2] Available here: [to be added]
[3] Available here: [to be added]
[4] The E4-Group is composed of the main stakeholders of higher education: the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students Union (ESU), the European University Association (EUA), and the European Association for the Applied Sciences in Higher Education (EURASHE).

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This revised version of the Key Considerations builds consequently on the strong foundation of the original document. It does not replace its core intentions, but reinforces and further operationalises them in light of accumulated experience, stakeholder feedback and ongoing policy developments. The revision was undertaken by a working group consisting of members of the Bologna Process Thematic Peer Group C on Quality Assurance including the original co-authoring organisations, namely the E4 Group and EQAR. This approach ensured the involvement of key stakeholders in higher education (ministries, QA agencies, higher education institutions, and students) in the preparation of the document.

The Key Considerations are complemented by a Code of Conduct that promotes ethical, responsible and transparent practice in CBQA.

The two documents should be considered together when applying CBQA as they fulfil two main complementary functions:

1. They provide a **common framework** (through this document) and **guiding principles** (through the accompanying Code of Conduct) to support higher education institutions and QA agencies before, during and after engagement in CBQA.
2. They serve as a **practical, structured and non-prescriptive toolkit** for implementing CBQA across its full lifecycle, highlighting key procedural and methodological considerations to ensure credible and useful outcomes and to protect the interests of all stakeholders.

Additionally, the documents also encourage public authorities to ensure:

- enabling legal/regulatory conditions for CBQA within their jurisdictions;
- the recognition of EQAR-registered agencies for complying with national external QA requirements and the acceptance of CBQA outcomes in line with Bologna commitments.

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Benefits, challenges and risks of CBQA

The benefits of CBQA can be observed at three levels: the higher education system, higher education institutions and QA agencies.

At the higher education system level:

- build mutual trust and recognition among higher education authorities;
- reduce duplication through single-procedure pathways for joint programmes;
- support a more consistent implementation of Bologna key commitments and tools in the EHEA;
- support the internationalisation of the sector as a whole and promote the exchange of good practices.

For higher education institutions:

- work with a QA agency that best suits their own mission and profile (where such choice is legally allowed), and which can in turn best meet their own needs;
- strengthen their internationalisation policies and strategy and foster collaboration with institutions in other countries;
- gain different perspectives on the institution's activities and internal quality assurance;
- develop and deliver joint programmes;
- enhance international visibility and attractiveness to international partners and students.

For QA agencies:

- expand their national/regional and international profile and gain reputation;
- increase and/or diversify revenue;
- gain inspiration and learning opportunities to improve their own processes and methodologies.

However, alongside these benefits, CBQA may also give rise to a number of challenges and risks that need to be carefully considered and managed by higher education systems, institutions and QA agencies. These challenges and risks may relate to varying contextual conditions and expectations regarding quality assurance processes, as well as the practical implementation of cross-border activities. If not adequately addressed, they may affect trust, transparency and the recognition of QA outcomes.

Potential challenges and risks:

- Legal/regulatory frameworks and recognition:
    - tensions between institutional autonomy (i.e. institutions choosing an agency from another country) and national/regional requirements;
    - additional administrative burdens and procedural requirements associated with CBQA;

    - differences between national/regional legal and regulatory frameworks that may limit the recognition or use of external CBQA outcomes and/or result in additional procedural requirements and expenditure for all parties;
- Methodology and operations:
    - insufficient understanding of the local higher education context, legislation or language by external QA agencies and experts, undermining the reliability and relevance of CBQA outcomes;
    - variations in the rigour and consistency with which standards, methodology, processes, procedures, judgements and decision-making practices are applied across national and cross-border contexts;
    - inconsistent interpretation and application of national standards by different agencies operating within the same country;
    - inadequate support from public authorities in accommodating CBQA activities within the national/regional context;
- Resources:
    - unintended consequences of marketisation of external QA, such as financial considerations taking priority over quality considerations;
    - differences in institutional resources and levels of internationalisation may shape institutions' capacity to engage in voluntary CBQA, potentially reinforcing inequalities within a HE system;
    - additional financial burden on institutions in cases where outcomes of CBQA are not being recognised at the national level or an additional validation procedure is required;
    - financial pressures or competition between QA agencies that may affect sustainability or independence of these organisations;
- Credibility and reputation:
    - opportunities for accreditation mills to market their services to institutions;
    - reputational risks for institutions and QA agencies if CBQA processes are not transparent, robust or trusted by stakeholders.

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Roadmap for CBQA

This roadmap is presented in the form of guiding and self-reflective questions, along with key considerations for CBQA. The questions follow the chronological order of the CBQA process:

- Section A addresses considerations to be made before CBQA is launched;
- Section B addresses the implementation of the CBQA process itself; and
- Section C addresses the results of CBQA.

Although the roadmap follows the lifecycle of a CBQA activity, it is important that relevant stakeholders, namely higher education institutions and QA agencies, carefully consider all three stages before formal engagement begins.

A. Pre-engagement considerations for CBQA

A1. Rationale

What is the rationale for engaging in CBQA?

Engagement in CBQA should be based on clearly defined objectives and a well-considered rationale. It is important that the motivations of all stakeholders involved in CBQA are transparent and clearly understood, in order to support trust, ensure accountability and safeguard the integrity of quality assurance processes as well as the intended outcome.

Where engaging in CBQA activities is driven by the joint nature of the programme, the use of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes is clearly encouraged. However, CBQA has a wider scope and is not limited to addressing by joint educational provision.

The QA agency and the institution may consider:

- whether CBQA replaces the mandatory external QA procedure required in the national legal framework or serves as a voluntary 'additional layer' procedure for enhancement purposes;
- the objectives and the expected added-value of the CBQA review.

For the QA agency, is CBQA an ad-hoc activity in response to a specific request, or a regular part of its portfolio of activities? How does it align with the agency's mission and strategy?

For the institution, how does choosing CBQA align with its mission and QA strategy?

A2. Legal framework and requirements

The QA agency and the institution may consider how flexible the higher education and quality assurance legislation regarding CBQA arrangements is. For example, do existing provisions allow

for adaptation in the context of CBQA, or do they require specific procedures, actors or approaches to be followed?

May the QA agency legally operate in the host country?

Public authorities play an important role in ensuring a clear, stable and transparent legal and regulatory framework that enables institutions and QA agencies to engage in CBQA with legal certainty. CBQA activities may be subject to national higher education frameworks and to specific national or regional regulatory requirements in the host country.

Before engaging in any CBQA activities, the QA agency should check whether it is legally authorised to operate in the host country and make the necessary arrangements with public authorities. The QA agency is advised to examine to what extent the public authorities will be involved in the review process.

May the institution use the chosen QA agency?

The QA agency should be EQAR-registered to ensure that it operates in accordance with the ESG.

The QA agency may carry out CBQA activities, provided that its statutory remit does not preclude this.

Are there any regulatory barriers that may prevent or limit the recognition of CBQA outcomes within the local higher education system?

The institution engaging in CBQA should verify the applicable legal framework and ensure that external quality assurance outcomes will be recognised and accepted by the relevant authorities, if needed.

What are other requirements for the QA agency to operate abroad and for the institution?

The QA agency and the institution are expected to have the necessary financial, human and operational capacity to carry out CBQA activities effectively. The potential additional workload associated with CBQA is worth considering before engaging in such activity.

Should the review be conducted in a language other than the QA agency's working language, the institution should consider the time and resources required to provide translations of relevant documents and interpretation during the site visit(s).

The QA agency should have appropriate arrangements for decisions in another jurisdiction and internal procedures, processes and IQA policy adapted to support international activities.

The institution should have appropriate structures in place to coordinate the process, provide the necessary information and support the external QA activities in CBQA. It may also consider whether there are any applicable public procurement procedures.

The institution is encouraged to explore the extent of the QA agency's background experience with CBQA (if any), the types of procedures implemented, the institutions and programmes reviewed, and the types of reports produced (including by looking at the agency's reports in DEQAR[5]).

A3. Joint reviews

Where a CBQA review is conducted jointly by two or more QA agencies, has a formal agreement been established?

In the context of CBQA, a joint review is a collaborative process where multiple QA agencies (e.g. from different countries), or a single foreign agency together with the local agency, jointly evaluate a programme (in most cases a joint programme) or an institution.

In joint reviews, a formal agreement helps ensure a shared understanding of the review process and the respective responsibilities of each agency. Clear arrangements help avoid misunderstandings, duplication of work and inconsistencies during the implementation of the review. The agreement should outline the standards and procedures to be applied, the role of each agency and the coordination of the review, the status of each agency's decision, complaints and appeals, data sharing and confidentiality, costs, and public communication.

[5] Available here: [to be added]

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B. Implementation of CBQA

B1. Cooperation and getting to know the context

Successful CBQA depends on advance planning by both the institution and the QA agency, as well as on cooperation and sharing of information between all actors involved.

Has the QA agency arranged an initial meeting with the institution to set the stage for the review?

An initial meeting between the QA agency and the institution is key to ensure a shared understanding of the national and institutional context and the forthcoming QA process, and identify risks early.

The preparation also includes a formal agreement between the QA agency and the institution, outlining, for example, the aims of the procedure and responsibilities of all parties (see section B5).

Have the institution and QA agency consulted or informed public authorities in the host country?

Where CBQA is part of the mandatory national external QA, the institution and QA agency should consult and involve, as appropriate, public authorities in the host country (such as ministries, QA agencies or accreditation councils). Where CBQA is voluntary, it is advisable for the institution and the QA agency to inform public authorities in the host country of their intended activities.

Has the QA agency concluded a cooperation agreement with the local QA agency?

Where relevant, both agencies may also conclude a cooperation agreement setting out their respective roles, responsibilities, and arrangements for the implementation of the procedure. This helps maintain constructive cooperation and allows for the clarification and discussion of relevant national criteria, procedures and expectations that may need to be taken into account during the process, thereby fostering fitness for purpose (see section B2).

Has the QA agency gathered sufficient background information?

Gathering further background information is key to ensuring that CBQA is effective and fit for purpose. This may be done by:

- conducting due diligence on the institution, including risk assessments;
- conducting preliminary research on the host country's educational context, quality assurance practices, and national requirements, including engaging with impartial local stakeholders to enhance understanding;
- contacting the local QA agency and public authorities (see question below).

Where applicable and appropriate, has the QA agency cooperated with the local QA agency and public authorities by sharing information on the CBQA activities and its outcomes?

Cooperation and sharing of information with the local QA agency and relevant public authorities are key to ensure a proper understanding of the legal context. This is particularly relevant when the decisions need to be taken into account within the national QA framework. It helps avoid misunderstandings, identify any national requirements that may affect the review process (see section B2) and support the recognition or use of CBQA outcomes.

The QA agency should gather the following information on the institution: its recognition status, its legitimacy in its jurisdiction, and previous external QA reports and decisions concerning the institution or the specific programme (in case of a programme review). It is also beneficial for the QA agency to familiarise itself more broadly with the higher education legislation, including recognition of qualifications and prior learning, admission, studying and examination, progression and graduation procedures, internships, legal requirements for staff and students, student support services, legal requirements regarding the governance and funding of the institution, external and internal stakeholder engagement, research requirements and practices, etc.

B2. Modifications of procedures

Where a CBQA outcome is intended to fulfil national external QA requirements, has the QA agency consulted the local QA agency and/or public authorities to identify any additional criteria, procedural requirements or recognition steps that apply?

The QA agency first needs to identify applicable national or regional criteria/procedures. Where the CBQA activity fulfils external QA requirements, the QA agency should assess whether additional national/regional criteria, indicators, procedural steps or decision rules need to be incorporated. To this end, the QA agency should inform and, where appropriate, engage with the relevant local QA agency.

If the QA agency needs to modify its procedures because of the cross-border setting, has it adapted its standards, criteria, indicators, tools and policies to ensure their applicability to the cross-border activities, while safeguarding quality, compliance with the ESG and its underlying values?

In order to ensure the fitness for purpose, the QA agency's approach and procedures must be appropriate and compatible with the institutional and national/regional or local contexts.

While the ESG provides a framework for all QA activities in the EHEA, they may be implemented in different ways in different contexts. Where necessary, specific adaptations might be required so that the QA agency's procedures meet the national legal requirements.

After having identified any additional criteria, procedural requirements or recognition steps, the QA agency needs to assess whether the legal framework permits appropriate adaptation and decide what adaptations are necessary.

The QA agency should ensure that, when undertaking CBQA activities and adapting its procedures, it remains compliant with the ESG and maintains its professional standards. It is worth emphasising that the adaptation should be necessary, proportionate and transparent, and should not compromise the integrity or independence of the QA agency's methodology and judgement.

Any adaptations to the QA agency's procedures are expected to be explained to the institution before the review starts and be publicly available.[6] The review report briefly outlines the adaptations relevant to understanding the assessment.

B3. Selection and training of peer-reviewers

How are the peer-reviewers selected?

The QA agency is responsible for the transparent, appropriate and careful selection, briefing and training of the peer-reviewers. Knowledge of the national/regional context and requirements may be secured through panel composition, briefing/training or independent contextual input, depending on the case. The QA agency may ask the local QA agency for suggestions of experts.

Considerations when nominating peer-reviewers:

- Ensure that there is no conflict of interest with the institution;
- Ensure that at least one peer-reviewer is familiar with the context;
- Ensure that the composition and level of expertise of the review panel are consistent with, and at least equivalent to, those set out required in the national procedures of the country in which the QA agency is based, particularly with regard to the participation of a student expert;
- Additional competencies, such as language proficiency and experience in international education systems, may also be necessary.

Do the peer-reviewers possess the necessary expertise to operate effectively in an international context?

Specific agency training and briefing are particularly important if the experts are working in an unfamiliar context. The training for review panels aims at preparing them for international work, including cultural awareness, an open attitude and knowledge of the local higher education system.

Similarly, do the QA agency's staff involved in CBQA activities possess the necessary expertise to operate effectively in an international context (e.g., language proficiency and intercultural competencies)?

[6] If relevant, the QA agency should refer to EQAR's procedure for reporting substantive changes.

CBQA can involve working across different languages, cultures and higher education systems. Staff involved in CBQA activities should therefore possess appropriate competencies to operate in an international context. These may include language skills, intercultural awareness and familiarity with different higher education environments. Such expertise helps support effective communication, mutual understanding and consistent implementation of quality assurance procedures. It is the responsibility of the QA agency to ensure that staff involved in CBQA are adequately prepared for international work and are supported in developing the competencies required for its cross-border activities.

B4. Communication with stakeholders and the wider public

Has the institution properly communicated to its stakeholders, including students, its decision to undergo CBQA and the reasons behind choosing a QA agency from outside its jurisdiction?

The purpose and goals of the CBQA procedure should be clear for all involved. Awareness and commitment among institutional stakeholders will support a meaningful CBQA process.

Has the QA agency published clear information on the scope and purpose of the CBQA activity and on procedures for CBQA? Is such information also part of the review report?

The QA agency would normally:

- clearly define the scope and purpose of the CBQA activity together with the institution and communicate them to any other involved stakeholders;
- publish clear information related to the procedures for CBQA activities in a widely spoken language. This should be publicly accessible and clearly differentiated from documents that are intended solely for national/regional procedures;
- carefully communicate about the expected outcomes, status, or impact of the CBQA procedure in the higher education context of the evaluated institution to ensure that the terminology used does not mislead stakeholders.

The QA agency should publish on its website clear information on how it conducts CBQA and which legal contexts/processes it is authorised to address. The relevant public authorities should provide authoritative information on national/regional requirements on their website (including through the EQAR Knowledge Base).

B5. Practical arrangements

Are the practical arrangements for carrying out CBQA clear to both parties (QA agency and institution)?

The practicalities of CBQA set out in the formal agreement between the QA agency and the institution may include aspects such as language considerations, specificities of the site visit(s),

transparent information on all fees and a clear allocation of responsibility for logistical expenses (e.g., transportation, accommodation, and per diem).

When the procedure is not conducted in its own national language(s), the QA agency needs to clarify any language requirements in conducting CBQA, with implications for the composition of the team of peer-reviewers. The institution and the QA agency are advised to ensure that documentation provided as part of the CBQA activity is available in the agreed working language of both parties. The institution should therefore provide, if necessary, translations of relevant documents and interpretation during the site visit(s).

Have the QA agency and the institution both clarified in advance the arrangements for the site visit(s)?

Communication between the QA agency, the peer-reviewers, and the institution should address all practical and procedural aspects of the site visit(s). This may include, among others, language arrangements, the format and duration of the site visit(s), the time allocated for interviews, the selection of interviewees, and reporting arrangements. The QA agency would normally give preference to onsite visits, as stated in the ESG. This is particularly recommended in the context of CBQA, as in person visits provide the peer-reviewers with a richer understanding of the institutional context and facilitate meaningful interaction with the HEI community. Hybrid or online formats may be used only where justified by the circumstances and should be implemented with due consideration of their limitations. The QA agency should consider whether the chosen format allows the panel to gather sufficient evidence to reach a robust judgement.

C. Addressing the results of CBQA

C1. Context sensitiveness

Has the QA agency ensured that recommendations are context-sensitive, feasible and appropriately justified, while preserving the value of an independent external perspective?

Recommendations resulting from a CBQA procedure should take into account the legal, institutional and educational context in which the institution operates. What works well in one system may not be suitable in another. Recommendations that reflect the local context are more likely to be relevant, realistic and useful for the institution, and therefore more likely to lead to improvement. At the same time, institutions may engage with CBQA in order to get an external perspective, from outside their national context.

C2. Transparency

Has the QA agency ensured that the report and decision, if applicable, are publicly available and accessible to an international audience?

The publication of the full review report and, where applicable, the corresponding decision supports transparency and allows stakeholders to understand the review outcomes. Review reports and decisions should be published in agencies' public databases, on institutional websites and in other relevant public information portals to ensure broad visibility and accessibility.

In a cross-border context, information should be accessible to audiences beyond the country in which the review was conducted. Making reports available in a widely understood language helps ensure that various stakeholders can access the results of the review. For reviews conducted by EQAR-registered agencies, reports are strongly recommended to be published in DEQAR to support transparency.

Has the QA agency established clear guidelines for communicating outcomes to the public?

The outcomes of a CBQA procedure should be communicated in a clear and consistent manner. This is particularly important where specific rights or status are associated with the review decision. Clear guidelines can help avoid misunderstandings about the scope and effect of the outcome and ensure that institutions and other stakeholders have a common understanding of the value and intended use of a CBQA procedure.

A logo may be used in this respect but should be linked to clear authorisation and controlled-use rule. The logo must not imply rights or status beyond the actual scope of the decision of a CBQA procedure.

C3. Recognition of the decision

Does the CBQA outcome require formal recognition, registration or another national step and, if so, which body is responsible and what process applies?

The QA agency and institution should take into account any additional steps necessary for the formal recognition by the relevant national bodies of any decision following the completion of a CBQA procedure that is part of national external QA requirements. This may not be necessary or relevant to the same extent for voluntary CBQA.

If CBQA is part of the national external QA requirements, the QA agency should ensure that any national requirements or criteria are easily identifiable in the structure and content of the report. In fact, clear identification of national requirements/criteria in the report does not, by itself, necessarily demonstrate adequate assessment.

C4. Complaints and appeals

Has the QA agency ensured that complaints and appeals procedures remain in line with existing policies and regular practices when conducting CBQA activities?

The QA agency should consider cross-border specificities in its complaints and appeals procedures, based on the ESG. Where necessary, specific adjustments should be made to ensure alignment with the local legal framework.

C5. Follow-up processes

Are both the QA agency and the institution aware of their respective responsibilities to ensure a proper follow-up to the external QA process?

The QA agency should provide for follow-up that is appropriate for CBQA activities, taking into account also situations where cooperation with the institution is limited to the short term.

If the process is part of the national external QA requirements, the institution should consider whether there is any discrepancy or incompatibility between the agency's follow-up procedure and national requirements (e.g., timeframes for subsequent procedures or associated costs).

Glossary

The definitions below clarify how the terms are used in this document and, where such definitions already exist in the ESG, are taken directly from them.

Cross-border quality assurance (CBQA) - External QA activities of a QA agency carried out in a country other than the one in which it is based or primarily operates.

External quality assurance - Refers to the comprehensive set of evaluation activities relating to teaching and learning in higher education, carried out by peer reviewers using a predefined framework. The assessment of institutions is conducted by quality assurance agencies against set standards in line with processes as described in the Part 2 of the ESG, on a cyclical basis. Given the multiple needs of higher education institutions, external quality assurance may take various forms to achieve different objectives. These may include evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities, which may be carried out differently and at different levels (such as programme or institutional level), and may lead to judgements and formal outcomes, depending on the context.

Quality assurance (QA) - Refers to all activities within the continuous improvement cycle (i.e. assurance and enhancement activities).

Higher education - Education delivered/provided according to the descriptors of Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area[7] and corresponding European Qualifications Framework.

Institution (HEI)- Refers to higher education institutions and other providers that deliver education aligned with the descriptors of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area[8] and corresponding European Qualifications Framework.

Stakeholders - All actors directly or indirectly interested in or affected by an institution's or agency's activity. Internal institutional stakeholders include students, staff (teaching, research, administration, management, support), while external stakeholders include, but are not limited to, alumni, employers, professional bodies, civil society and public authorities.

Host country - the country in which the CBQA activity is conducted.

Local QA agency - QA agency that is based or primarily operates within the host country.

Local stakeholders - stakeholders of the local institution or QA agency.

[7] Levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 of EQF correspond to QF-EHEA cycles.
In some higher education systems, level 5 EQF is not considered higher education.
[8] Levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 of EQF correspond to QF-EHEA cycles.
In some higher education systems, level 5 EQF is not considered higher education.

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Local higher education system - higher education system of the host country.

Public authorities - national, regional or local authorities responsible for higher education in a given legislative context.