

HAHE Follow-up Report to 2022 ENQA Review



**Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Response to Panel Recommendations	4
Significant developments in HAHE capacity and its quality assurance system.....	10

Introduction

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) was established in 2020, as the successor to the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency (HQA). It is an independent body with full administrative and operational autonomy and a legal supervision by the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports. In February 2022, the HAHE was reviewed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) against the ESG 2015, in order to reconfirm its ENQA membership and to be admitted as a member of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). As a result, in April 2023 the ENQA Board decided to renew HAHE's full membership in ENQA. Also, in March 2023, the EQAR approved HAHE's application for inclusion on the Register, until 30/09/2027. The final external review Report was validated in September 2022 and included a number of commendations, recommendations and suggestions for improvement by the ENQA review Panel. Following to reflection on the review process and careful consideration of the Panel recommendations, and with a view to continuous improvement, the HAHE drew up an action plan in order to organise and prioritise actions towards response to each recommendation. This Report presents the Panel's recommendations and suggestions along with the progress that has been made so far in addressing each of them. Furthermore, the Report shortly describes the recent changes and reforms that occurred in the Greek Higher Education, and the subsequent new responsibilities in the field of QA assigned to the HAHE.

Response to Panel Recommendations

The following table presents the Panel recommendations and suggestions for further improvement, along with the corresponding actions taken by the HAHE.

ESG	Panel Recommendations & Suggestions for further improvement	Actions taken by the HAHE
2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance Board Decision: Compliant	<i>Suggestion for further improvement 2.1.1:</i> In respect of the PDCA cycle, the review panel recommends that more attention is given to the “C” and “A” elements of this approach to continuous improvement.	Regarding the PDCA cycle, and especially the steps ‘C’ and ‘A’, the following are implemented or scheduled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic interaction with the HEIs is in place. Three times a year, during the Hellenic Universities Rectors’ Synod, the HEIs are briefed on the HAHE’s actions (the relevant presentations are available), while, at the same time, the HAHE receives comments by the HEIs. • The HAHE systematically implements seminars addressed to the Quality Assurance Units of the HEIs and relevant staff involved, providing general guidelines on the sound application of each set of Standards. • Significant exchange of correspondence with the Quality Assurance Units of the HEIs takes place throughout the year, in order for the HAHE to provide clarifications and answer queries, on issues specific to each HEI. Over the next two years, the HAHE is planning the conduct of consultation meetings with the Quality Assurance Units of the HEIs, aiming at the transfer of experience gained from the external quality assurance activities and at discussing the response to identified weaknesses. These meetings will take place three times a year. Furthermore, three participations per year in the Hellenic Universities Rectors’ Synods are foreseen.
	<i>Suggestion for further improvement 2.1.2:</i> The review panel suggests that more attention is focused on the qualitative review of its activities and the subsequent incorporation of findings into amended procedures.	In respect of internal quality assurance, the HAHE is working on introducing new procedures regarding monitoring and obtaining feedback. As regards external quality assurance, the HAHE analyses the outcomes of the relevant activities to measure effectiveness and subsequently act on anything that went

		wrong, in order to fine-tune the entire process, and revise the set of Standards and the procedures, where deemed necessary.
2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose Board Decision: Partially Compliant	Panel Recommendation 2.2.1: The SC of HAHE should develop strategic proposals aimed at strengthening stakeholder engagement.	Strategic proposals aimed at strengthening stakeholders' engagement have been made and include students, Quality Assurance Units of the HEIs, HEIs' administration, as well as scientific and professional associations (such as the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, the Hellenic Federation of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Enterprises, the Panhellenic Medical Association, and other entities). For instance: consultation meetings with the Panhellenic Medical Association will be launched to obtain input on the development of the new set of Standards for Medical Schools. Similarly, the HAHE will seek input by the Hellenic Federation of ICT Enterprises to develop an ICT-specific set of Standards. Systematic consultation meetings with chambers and students will be incorporated in the Quality Manual.
	Panel Recommendation 2.2.2: HEIs should be given a much bigger input into the development, testing, and review of any proposed new procedures.	The Authority is planning to conduct online consultation and hold working meetings with the Quality Assurance Units of the HEIs, for exchange of views and for obtaining feedback.
	Panel Recommendation 2.2.3: All existing procedures should be reviewed and amended on a planned, cyclical basis.	Revision of all procedures is implemented - and will continue-, as described in the Quality Manual.
	Panel Recommendation 2.2.4: Stakeholders need a much greater level of involvement in all HAHE procedures and activities.	The HAHE is currently planning regular meetings with the Greek chambers aiming at a fruitful exchange of views. Furthermore, a survey will be launched soon, addressed to members of the chambers who participated in external accreditation and evaluation panels. More importantly, at the proposal of the HAHE, a new Law that passed in July 2024 provides for the establishment of a register of members of chambers and professional bodies. The creation of such a register per discipline has already started. Members of this register are also expected to act as an advisory body on issues pertinent to their discipline.

	Panel Recommendation 2.2.5: The exclusion of certain subject-specific backgrounds of reviewers from IQAS reviews should be removed.	This recommendation possibly accrues from a misunderstanding. It should be clarified that, according to our procedure, no kind of exclusion of any group of experts of specific background is in place, unless the fit-for-purpose practice that the HAHE applies here is perceived as a sort of exclusion. The HAHE considers the relevance of the experts' background with the entity under review as a fit-for-purpose feature and not as a sort of exclusion of the other groups of experts.
2.3 Implementing processes Board Decision: Compliant	Panel Recommendation 2.3: HAHE should prepare a comprehensive qualitative analysis of its follow-up reports. It should consider the findings and conclusions from this analysis and use them to systematically inform a review of the procedure.	The qualitative analysis of the follow-up reports submitted by the HEIs, in order for the HAHE to draw useful conclusions, is in progress. The Quality Manual has also been updated to incorporate the relevant procedure.
2.4 Peer-review experts Board Decision: Not Compliant	Panel Recommendation 2.4.1: HAHE needs to develop an effective training programme for student experts and should get advice and guidance from other agencies on how to do so.	As from July 2022, HAHE's student register has been expanded to include postgraduate and doctoral students. Special training material has been produced for students who participate in review panels, and a series of working meetings has taken place. A significant number of students have already participated in HAHE review panels.
	Panel Recommendation 2.4.2: HAHE should assume a national leadership role in developing a meaningful student representative system.	As a first step to facilitate connection and networking among students who are already members of the register and to attract new students to engage in QA actions, the HAHE is considering to organise open events on QA in HE. The events will include presentations of the HAHE QA activities, promote students' engagement in QA, and stimulate interaction among student reviewers.
	Panel Recommendation 2.4.3: The gender balance issue on HAHE's register of experts and on individual panels should be vigorously addressed.	The HAHE takes serious consideration of the gender balance issue, and it is worth noting that the current gender proportion in both the Supreme Council (SC) and in the Evaluation & Accreditation Council (EAC) is close to 50-50, as the vacancies that arose during the last couple of year were filled by women (4 academics and one student). However, addressing gender balance in review panels still remains quite difficult, as inclusion in the Register of Experts is voluntary, and the majority of applications come from men, especially in certain disciplines, such as engineering and computer science.

2.5 Criteria for outcomes Board Decision: Compliant	Panel Recommendation 2.5.1: Specific training and briefing material should be developed for HAHE staff and all reviewers covering the requirements for regulated professions at both national and European level.	The HAHE has developed training and briefing material for the members of review panels, which deal with general QA issues as well as with analysis of each individual set of Standards (undergraduate / postgraduate study programmes, Internal Quality Assurance Systems, etc). Till now, the HAHE has not developed any specific set of Standards to address regulated professions requirements. The first set of Standards of this type concerns the Medical Schools and is currently at the drafting stage.
	Panel Recommendation 2.5.2: HAHE should work with the HEIs to ensure and assure the primacy of enhancement in its criteria and outcomes.	The internal QA system of the HAHE collects evidence of all communications conducted with the HEIs, and takes note of their understanding of QA enhancement.
2.6 Reporting Board Decision: Compliant	Suggestion for further improvement 2.6.1: The HAHE website could be reviewed with the objective of improving its utility.	A number of improvements have been made on the Authority's website, e.g. a new link with press releases has been created to inform about meetings with stakeholders and other communications or events. The HAHE is currently working on the restructure of the mode of display of the Accreditation Reports on the website.
	Suggestion for further improvement 2.6.2: Published decisions of the EAC could contain more detail.	The format of the accreditation decisions letters has been enriched to include more details on the results of the external review.
2.7 Complaints and appeals Board Decision: Compliant	Suggestion for further improvement 2.7: A full review of complaints and appeals procedures should be undertaken that addresses the transparency and independence of processes used.	As a result of the revision of the complaints and appeals procedure, a new regulation on appeals and procedures has been drafted and put into place since February 2024. The regulation is also published on the HAHE website (https://www.ethaae.gr/en/quality-assurance/appeals-and-complaints) .
3.1 Activities, policy, and processes for quality assurance Board Decision: Compliant	Panel Recommendation 3.1.1: That HAHE develop mechanisms for the more explicit inclusion of stakeholders in its QA processes and activities.	As stated above in response to recommendations 2.2.4 and 2.2.1, regular meetings with representatives of the Greek chambers are on the agenda. Furthermore, a survey will be launched to members of the chambers who participated in external accreditation and evaluation panels. In addition, the establishment of a register of non-academics external stakeholders (i.e. members of chambers and professional/scientific associations) is expected to feed in valuable feedback into the system.

		Other mechanisms developed to enhance stakeholders' involvement include systematic consultation meetings with chambers and students.
	Panel Recommendation 3.1.2: That HAHE use its data-collection processes as a tool to develop a pro-active and more strategic planning-oriented approach.	As already mentioned in response to recommendation 2.1.2, the HAHE is working on introducing new procedures regarding monitoring and obtaining feedback. The data collected and the conclusions drawn will be utilized in strategic planning and in the fine-tuning and updating of the Authority's existing procedures.
3.4 Thematic analysis Board Decision: Partially Compliant	Panel Recommendation 3.4: HAHE should examine the work in thematic analysis carried out by other agencies in order to broaden its understanding of this topic and to provide it with benchmarks for its own performance.	The Authority conducts ongoing study on how thematic analysis is perceived by other Agencies. However, the HAHE believes that that the methodology followed is well-established. The EQAR seems to share this view, as stated in its published letter of membership approval (§ ESG 3.4).
3.5 Resources Board Decision: Partially Compliant	Panel Recommendation 3.5.1: HAHE needs to establish a secure and adequate financial basis for its activities.	In 2024 the HAHE has broadened its institutional framework as regards its funding resources and possibilities, so as to establish a secure finance basis for its activities.
	Panel Recommendation 3.5.2: HAHE needs to secure a staffing complement that reduces its reliance on short-term contracts for its QA activities.	In 2024 the HAHE has broadened its institutional framework, so as to establish a more solid and permanent staffing system.
3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct Board Decision: Partially Compliant	Panel Recommendation 3.6.1: HAHE should develop a comprehensive set of written procedures covering all of the gaps identified in this section, so that the security of the processes does not rely solely or mainly on the custom and practice of any person or entity in HAHE.	In the context of the revision and enhancement of the internal quality assurance and of the Quality Manual, new procedures have been introduced to address these issues. The HAHE has developed a separate internal audit system to safeguard the integrity of its procedures.
	Panel Recommendation 3.6.2: HAHE should develop a structured plan for its internal quality assurance that has annual reviews built into it.	A structured plan for the HAHE's internal quality assurance has already been developed and is implemented on an annual basis.
	Panel Recommendation 3.6.3: HAHE should engage external advice to assist it in developing its internal quality assurance culture.	The HAHE has drawn a road map towards the implementation of this recommendation, starting with training on the development of quality culture among

		its staff members. In particular, a series of four webinars was held in 2023, by the “JMK Anthropocentric - Corporate Training & Development”, on quality culture and relevant subjects.
--	--	--

Significant developments in HAHE capacity and its quality assurance system

In the time since February 2022, when the ENQA site visit took place, the HAHE has designed a new QA strategy, in the context of which, important steps have been taken -as described below-, while other actions are to follow in the near future.

The HAHE has developed three new sets of Quality Standards for the accreditation review of: Postgraduate Study Programmes, Doctoral Programmes, and Centres for Training and Lifelong Learning (CTLL), respectively. Also, a revision of the Quality Standards for the accreditation of the Internal Quality Assurance Systems (IQAS), and the undergraduate study programmes of the HEIs has been implemented.

In the context of its strategy on the engagement of stakeholders in QA, the HAHE inaugurated contacts and initiated the organisation of workshops with students, HEIs, and employers' associations. A special cooperation has been established with key actors of the labour market. A start was made with ICT studies and the relevant stakeholders.

It is worth noting here that March 2024 marked a significant milestone in the Greek Higher Education, as a major reform took place. The new Law adopted allows for the foundation of private Universities in Greece. This development is expected to alter the landscape in the Higher Education, whereas the HAHE is called upon to undertake a significant role, by granting initial accreditation to the new Universities prior to their operation, and by conducting accreditation review of all study programmes.

Moreover, new digital tools have been established to support the Authority's internal quality assurance system. These tools were designed and put into operation in January 2023 and are namely:

- Digital platform (IMS) for the submission and management of accreditation proposals submitted by the HEIs.
- Digital register of all Greek HEIs' (general profile information), at all levels (Institution, Department, Study Programme, Internal Quality Assurance System).
- Asynchronous distance learning platform, addressed to the members of the external evaluation and accreditation panels (both experts and students) aiming at their further information and training on quality assurance and accreditation, and the relevant procedures. In December 2023 the configuration of the system was carried out and the courses were uploaded. The platform -currently at a pilot phase- is available for use by the students, and is subsequently going to be offered for use to the other interested parties.

In addition, the HAHE has prepared thematic analysis reports based on the accreditation of study programmes by discipline, i.e. Medicine, AgroSciences, and Information & Communication Technologies (ICT).

All the above, along with other developments, have been part of the internal QA of the Authority and have enriched the external QA activities. According to our planning, by the next external review, the cycle of these changes will have been completed and the QA system and the capacity of the HAHE are going to be significantly improved.



**Εθνική Αρχή
Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης**
Hellenic Authority
for Higher Education