Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care (ECAQA)

Almaty Kazakhstan

2021

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION **4**

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) **4**

3. HIGHER EDUCATION AND QA OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AGENCY **6**

4. HISTORY, PROFILE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY **14**

5. HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY **21**

6. PROCESSES AND THEIR METHODOLOGIES **23**

7. AGENCY'S INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE **26**

8. AGENCY'S INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES **27**

9. COMPLIANCE WITH EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (PART 3) **31**

9.1 ESG Standard 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance 31
3.1 Supporting documents 34
9.2 ESG Standard 3.2 Official status 34
3.2 Supporting documents 35
9.3 ESG Standard 3.3 Independence 35
3.3 Supporting documents 36
9.4 ESG Standard 3.4 Thematic analysis 37
9.5 ESG Standard 3.5 Resources 39
3.5 Supporting documents 41
9.6 ESG Standard 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct 41
3.6 Supporting documents 1 43
3.6 Supporting documents 2 45
9.7 ESG Standard 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies 45
3.7 Supporting documents 45

10. COMPLIANCE WITH EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (PART 2) **46**

10.1 ESG Standard 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance 46
2.1 Supporting documents 52
10.2 ESG Standard 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose 52
2.2 Supporting documents 53
10.3 ESG Standard 2.3 Implementing processes 53
2.3 Supporting documents 56
10.4 ESG Standard 2.4 Peer-review experts 56
2.4 Supporting documents 59
10.5 ESG Standard 2.5 Criteria for outcomes 59
2.5 Supporting documents 60
10.6 ESG Standard 2.6 Reporting 60
2.6 Supporting documents 63
10.7 ESG Standard 2.7 Complaints and appeals 63
2.7 Supporting documents 63

11. INFORMATION AND OPINIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS **64**

12. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MAIN FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS REVIEW(S) AND AGENCY'S RESULTING FOLLOW-UP (FOR SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT REVIEWS ONLY) **67**

13. SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE AGENCY'S STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS **67**

14. CURRENT CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT **68**

GLOSSARY OF TERMS **69**

ANNEXES **70**

Brief information about Kazakhstan, Higher Education and ECAQA

Area	2.7 million square kilometres
Capital	Nur-Sultan
Population*	18.513 million (2019)
Currency	Tenge (KZT)
GDP per capita *	9,731.2 USD (2019)
Number of HEIs **	131, consist of: – 11 National universities – 14 academies – 88 universities – 14 non-civil universities – 4 institutions Number of Medical HEIs within 131: – 1 Kazakh National Medical University – 7 Medical Universities (Astana, Semey, Karaganga, Aktobe, Almaty (3)) – 1 Academy (South Kazakhstan) – 4 Faculty of Medicine at 4 Universities
Number of newly enrolled students 2019-2020 **HEIs** **VET**	 604,345 (Bachelor-562,292; Master-35,690; PhD-6363) 469,353
ECAQA established	2017
Years of external reviews	APQR (2019)

***World Bank**

****IAC National compilation (2020)** http://iac.kz/sites/default/files/nacionalnyy_sbornik_2019-2020.pdf

1. Introduction

The Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care (ECAQA) was registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan as a non-governmental non-for-profit organisation for quality assurance in higher education on February 3, 2017. ECAQA is recognised by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and was included on the National Register of Recognised Accrediting Agencies (Register 1) on March 13, 2018.

ECAQA, as a specialised/professional accreditation agency in medicine, biomedicine and health sciences, is included on the Directory of Organisations that Recognize/Accredit Medical Schools (DORA) of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER), USA https://www.faimer.org/resources/dora/kazakhstan.html#a3 and The Council for Higher Education Accreditation International Quality Group (CHEA/CIQG) International Directory, USA http://ecaqa.org/en/international-collaboration/membership/413-chea-2, https://www.chea.org/international-directory/eurasian-sentre-accreditation-and-quality-assurance-higher-education-and.

Taking into consideration the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science Policy in internationalization and enhancing the quality assurance in higher education, the ECAQA was externally evaluated by APQR/APQN and included on the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR) in December 2019.

ECAQA is a Full Member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA), Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and the Member of the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG).

The Board of ENQA granted ECAQA Affiliate status of ENQA on October 25, 2017.

The Self-Assessment of the Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care (ECAQA) has been undertaken for the purpose of determining whether ECAQA meets the ESG (Part 2, Part 3) to become a Member of ENQA and comply with the European Quality Assurance Register's (EQAR) requirements for the purpose of registration.

ECAQA SAR includes the description of the agency's practice in quality assurance in higher education including medical and healthcare professions education, current activities, status in the national context and its compliance with the national requirements and ESG (Part 2, Part 3). The SAR has been developed in accordance with the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Review's requirements (Annex I: Guide of content for the SAR) and the provided main structure.

2. Development of the self-assessment report (SAR)

ECAQA expressed the interest in becoming a member of ENQA and the registration in EQAR on February 19, 2020.

As suggested by Secretariat of ENQA, the ECAQA Expert's Board Members carefully studied the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews and the ENQA and EQAR web-sites' information related to becoming a Member of ENQA and undergoing a review against the ESG as well.

ECAQA submitted the official request letter for a review to the ENQA President Christoph Grolimund confirming the ECAQA's application for the ENQA Membership and registration on the EQAR. The review process is to be coordinated by ENQA.

In order to finalise the ECAQA application process and, according to the requested procedures by ENQA and EQAR, the Tripartite Terms of Reference between the ECAQA, ENQA and EQAR including the eligibility requirements and quality assurance agency activities have been revised and approved by ENQA Board. The suggested schedule of the ENQA External Review has been indicated.

The ECAQA's Self-Assessment Commission consists of:

Sholpan Kaliyeva MD, PhD, Professor	**Chair of SAR Commission** **Chair of Commission on Higher and Postgraduate Medical and Pharmaceutical Education**
Farida Nurmanbetova, MD, DMedSc	Adviser to ECAQA
Saule Sarsenbayeva, MD, DmedSc, Professor, MBA	Director General of ECAQA
Alma Kuzgibekova, MD, PhD, Associate Professor	Chair of ECAQA Expert Board
Makpal Umarova	Chair of ECAQA Department for Accreditation and Monitoring
Dariyabanu Sarsenbayeva, BA	Chair of ECAQA Department for International Collaboration
Marina Morenko MD, DMedSc, Professor	Chair of Commission for Postgraduate Medical Education
Zaure Baygozhina, MD, PhD, Associate Professor	Chair of Commission on Nursing Education
Gulmira Ibrayeva, MD, Associate Professor	Chair of Commission on Continuing Professional Development In Health Care
Sholpan Ramazanova, MD, PhD	Member of Commission on Higher and Postgraduate Medical and Pharmaceutical Education
Alfiya Shamsutdinova, MD, PhD	Member of Commission on Higher and Postgraduate Medical and Pharmaceutical Education
Ayman Khadzhiyeva, PhD, Associate Professor	Member of Commission on Continuing Professional Development In Health Care
Gulshat Kemelova MD, PhD, Associate Professor	Chair of Commission on Accreditation of Clinical Skills Centre
Lyazzat Yeraliyeva, MD, DSc	Member of ECAQA Accreditation Council
Dariya Dzhangarasheva, Expert-Medical Student	Member of ECAQA Accreditation Council
Merey Tursynbayeva, BA	Member of Expert Commission on Higher and Postgraduate Education Master Student of the Nazarbayev University

The ECAQA Self-Assessment Commission (SAC) developed the arrangements plan and the timeline to conduct the self-assessment, identified the self-assessment team members, their responsibilities, discussed the specific requirements to SAR and its content, the methods for collecting information and data relevant to the external and internal quality assurance procedure and existing quality assurance practice of agency. A SWOT Analysis process supported by all ECAQA staff and Expert Board members and their conclusions and offers for IQA and EQA improvement as well as the feedback on the work of the ECAQA from external stakeholders were analysed and summarised by the ECAQA SAC.

The SAC finalised the SAR, and it was approved by the ECAQA Expert Board, Minutes No.7, January 25, 2021.

This is the first time for ECAQA to undergo external review against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area (ESG). The Self-Assessment Commission (SAC) reflected and described its practice in internal quality assurance (ESG/Part 2) and external quality assurance (ESG/Part 3) in the SAR with supporting documents to meet the requirements for the Membership of ENQA and registration for the EQAR as well.

3. Higher education and QA of higher education in the context of the agency

The basis of the state policy in higher education is the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1995). In accordance with the paragraph 2, Article 30 of the Constitution,

"All citizens shall have the right to receive free general secondary, technical and vocational education, and on a competitive basis a free post-secondary, higher and post–higher education provided that the education at these levels is received for the first time".

Higher education is acquired by citizens who have completed secondary general, TVET or further (post-secondary) education.

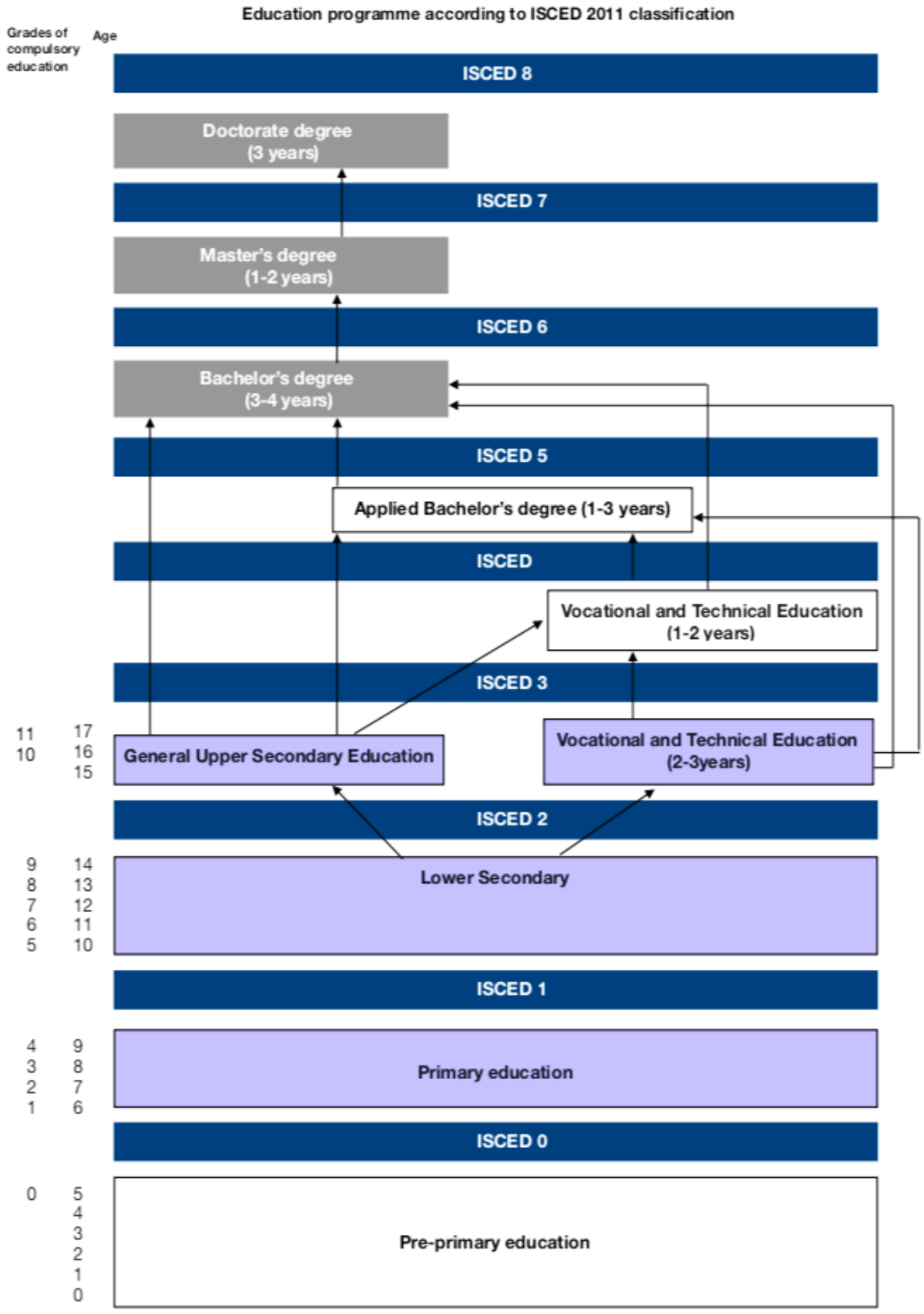
During the years of independence, the higher education system in Kazakhstan went through several phases:

1991-1994	1995-1998	1999-2000
Establishment of legal and regulatory framework of HE	**Modernization and renovation of the HE system**	**Decentralization of management and financing of education**
– A network of higher education institutions was created. – HE specialties were updated in order to meet the requirements of local market economy. – All changes were secured in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan On HE (1993). – In 1994, the State Standard of HE (General Provisions), which first identified the introduction of a multi-level structure of higher education in the country, was approved.	– The Concept of State Policy in Education was approved by the National Council on State Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan (4.08.1995). – From 1995 to 1997, the first Kazakhstani educational standards were adopted for 310 specialties of higher professional education. – In 1996, a new edition of the Classifier (list) containing 3-42 specialties in HE of the Republic of Kazakhstan was approved.	– Law On Education (June, 1999): "Decentralization of management system of education". – "New model for the formation of the student population of state HEIs in the Republic of Kazakhstan" was approved (24.04.1999): allowed a prospective student the right to choose particular institution and major. – "Education" State Programme (30.09.2000): integrated continuous system of education, for all levels from pre-school until postgraduate education. – Government Decree No.912 (17.06.2000) initiated privatisation of public universities, 12 HEIs were reorganised into joint stock companies.
2001-2006	**2007-2010**	**2010-present**
Strategic development of higher vocational education system	**Transition to the updated structure and content of education**	**Modernization of higher and postgraduate education**
– In 2001, in accordance with the International Classifier of Education Systems, a new Classifier of areas of training in HE specialties was developed, containing 283 specialties of special education, 70 master's degree and 46 bachelor's degree education. – The State Programme for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2005-2010 and the State Programme for the	– The Concept of State Policy in Education was approved by the National Council on State Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan (4.08. 1 995). The structure of education was adjusted with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). – Technical and vocational education was restructured. – Tertiary education was introduced.	– Kazakhstan engaged in Implementing the principles of the Bologna declaration and the Internationalization of the educational system of Kazakhstan. – The major changes were Incorporated into the State Programme of Education Development 2011-2020. – Kazakhstan adopted a National Qualifications Framework (2012). – "Expansion of Academic and Managerial Independence of HEIs" Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan (4.07.2018) No. 171 -VI.

Development of Technical and Vocational Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2008- 2012 were adopted.	– A National System for Education Quality Evaluation was created, which included all elements of independent external evaluation. – All HEIs were transferred to the academic credit system of education (1.09.2008). – Republic of Kazakhstan entered into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (11.03.2010).	– Kazakhstan transferred to a new credit system (Bachelor 240 credits; Master 60-120; Doctoral programmes 180) on January, 2019.

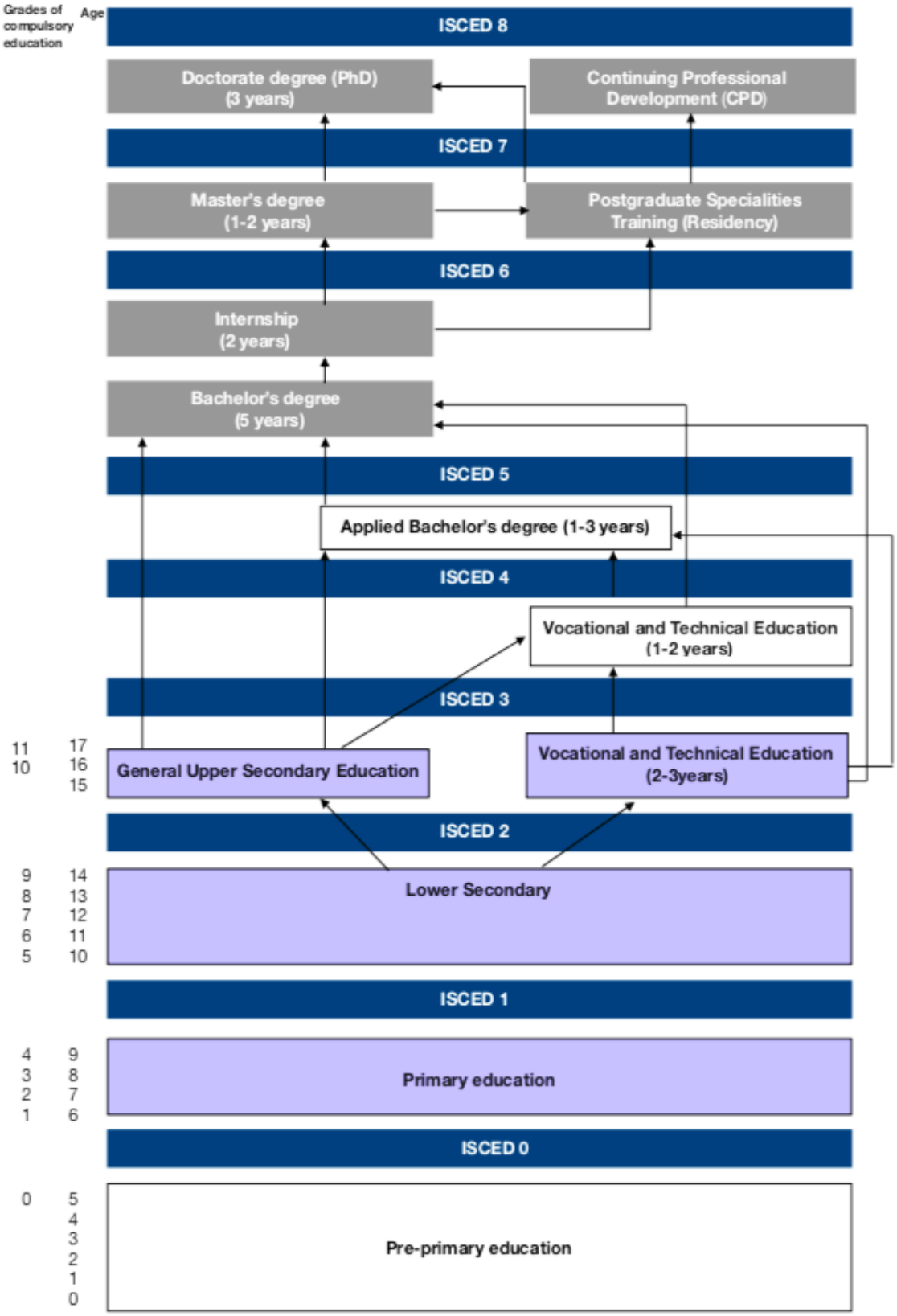
The National Qualifications System was adopted in 2012 with amendments as of 18.12.2013. The National Qualifications Framework aided in systematizing and providing a basis for recognition of learning outcomes, contributed to the enhancement of quality and access to all levels of education, including TVET, higher and post-higher education, facilitated the improvement of the relationships with the world's labour markets and the mutual recognition of qualifications, as well as the implementation of lifelong learning strategies. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) completed the cross reference of its frameworks to the European Qualification Framework (EQF LLL).

Structure of Kazakhstan's Education System



OECD review (2017), https://www.oecd.org/countries/kazakhstan/higher-education-in-kazakhstan-2017-9789264268531-en.htm

The Structure of Kazakhstan Medical and other Healthcare Professions Education



According to the report of Information Analytical centre of Ministry of Education, 131 higher education institutions (HEIs), including the branches, operate in the Republic of Kazakhstan as of 2019/2020 academic year.

Almost two thirds of the universities are private, less than a third is public (state) HEIs, and four universities are foreign-run. Only one university (Nazarbayev University-NU) holds autonomous position.

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan monitors and regulates both public and private higher education institutions. Moreover, all universities are subject to regular certification and accreditation.

Students' enrolment rate and academic year

The academic year starts on September 1. It consists of academic terms, the term of interim certification (at least 1 week), practices and holidays. In graduation year, the term of the final certification is included in the academic year. The total duration of the academic year should be at least 36 weeks.

An academic term may last 15 weeks (semester), 10 weeks (trimester) or 8 weeks (quarter). Professional practice is a compulsory component of higher education programmes. It is divided into training, pedagogical, industrial and pre-diploma practice.

The number of students in the 2019/2020 academic year increased by 11.4% compared to the previous one. The total number of students is 604,345 people, of whom 321,643 are girls or 53.2% according to the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan Committee on Statistics. 163,494 students were admitted in the current academic year; 60,654 students dropped out before the end of their studies for various reasons during the previous academic year; 142,435 people graduated. In addition, there is a large proportion of graduate and postgraduate students who obtained their degrees abroad via the special Kazakhstani Bolashak scholarship programme. The programme includes both academic training (master's degree, doctoral degree) and research and production internships, accordingly 13976 students received the scholarships during the last 28 years.

79.6% of the total number of students are enrolled in on-campus study mode, 14.9% of students are studying externally and 5.5% of students are evening-time (part-time) students.

18,088 people are studying at the expense of state educational grants, which is 29.8% of the total number of students; 424,257 people or 70.2% are studying on a fee basis. The tuition fees vary from around US $1000 to US $5,500 per year, depending on the programme, institution and study level. HEIs offer a variety of scholarships for students with high academic achievement and/or financial difficulties.

Considering the language of instruction 65.2% of students studies in the state language (Kazakh), whereas 30.2% of students studies in Russian, and 4.6% of students studies in English. 223 academic programmes are taught fully in English at 21 Universities. 301 programmes are run jointly with international HEIs.

The share of foreign students is a key indicator of the Strategic Development Plan of Kazakhstan until 2025. According to the data provided by universities in the 2019-2020 academic year, 40 188 foreign students are studying in Kazakhstan (Fig. 1). This is 6.7% of the total student population. To date, the number of foreign students were almost doubled in comparison with 2018.

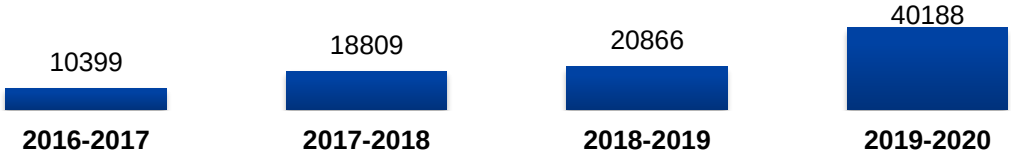


Figure 1. Number of foreign students

The number of full-time teaching staff is 38,470 people, including 5715 part-time teachers. The academic background of faculty staff: 8.5% Doctors of Science, 33% of teachers are Candidates of

Science, 6.4% of the staff are Professors and 15.3% of the employees are Associate Professors. The number of teachers with master's degree is 12995 people or 33.7%, 2870 people or 7.4% are doctors of philosophy (PhD).

In accordance with the Law "On introducing amendments to some legislative acts on the expansion of academic and managerial independence of higher educational institutions" adopted on July 4, 2018 No. 172-VI., HEIs gained more autonomy in:

- modernising the system of management of higher education institution;
- developing and approving educational programmes;
- defining internal standards for academic load, rules for admission, rules for organising internships, rules on student flow and other procedures regulating academic activity of the HEIs;
- conducting ongoing monitoring of student performance, as well as final certification of students;
- introducing modern forms of professional training, etc.

Moreover, the existing functions of universities were complemented by the following new functions:

- creating an endowment fund;
- creating legal entities for scientific and educational activities;
- opening start-up companies;
- establishing branches in foreign countries.

These changes led to the development or revision of 56 by-laws, regulating the operation of HEIs. The reform is aimed at increasing the competitiveness of universities. It allows HEIs to gain academic autonomy and managerial independence through the transformation into non-profit joint stock companies. It is expected that universities will increase the effectiveness of their activities through accountability to corporate bodies of governance. In addition, HEIs will be able to diversify their sources of income and introduce modern methods of management and budgeting.

Among the world ranking positions, ten universities of Kazakhstan are featured in the QS World University Rankings 2020, notably Al-Farabi Kazakh National University taking 207th position as of 2020.

The Quality Assurance System in Higher Education in Kazakhstan

During years of independence, national quality assurance system has evolved from highly centralized and governmentally controlled one into a more decentralized. In response to the challenges faced at the early stage of independence, the government developed the legal framework and adopted a number of strategic documents: The Law on Education (1999); State Programme on Education (2000); Strategic Plan for the Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2001); State Programme for Education Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2005–2010 (2004).

The above documents defined main principles, goals, and mechanisms of the state policy in education and the creation of a national system of education quality assurance. In compliance with these policy documents, the infrastructure and mechanisms to support functioning of quality assurance system started to be developed.

At that time, the MES RK conducted control over quality by applying a complex system of external evaluation procedures such as licensing, attestation, accreditation, and external students' performance assessment.

In 2001, the first accreditation was introduced in Kazakhstan in the form of state accreditation of higher education institutions by the MES RK on the basis of 27 quantitative performance indicators. However, the accreditation at that time was a close copy of attestation and did not address international requirements to the process of external quality assurance.

In 2005, the first accrediting agency – National Accreditation Centre (NAC) of the MES RK – was established to conduct accreditation. NAC encouraged and motivated institutions to undergo the process of institutional accreditation, which was quite a new concept for Kazakhstan HEIs.

The amendments to the Law on Education in 2007 and later in 2011 increased the importance of accreditation in quality assurance in education and stated the independent nature of accreditation and proclaimed it as a voluntary procedure (Law on Education 2007 with amendments as of 2011). In addition, it was stated that the government of Kazakhstan would not interfere into the process of accreditation.

Since 2012, non-profit, non-governmental organisations have been conducting accreditation. Only accredited HEIs have the right to receive state funding, offer their programmes at different levels (bachelor's degree, master's degree, and Ph.D. programmes), and issue the government-approved diplomas.

In 2012, the Republican Accreditation Council was established, and a National Register of Accrediting Agencies was developed. The government regulates the accrediting agencies according to their recognition and inclusion on the National Register.

In addition to the national quality assurance system, most of HEIs started to develop internal quality assurance systems and strategies in response to governmental requirements and imposed regulations. Almost every university in the country has created a department that is responsible for internal quality assurance. The department is responsible for compliance with the requirements of the national system of quality assurance, organisation of the procedures of licensing, attestation, and accreditation, as well as for development of internal quality assurance strategies and initiatives and monitoring of academic achievements. Evaluation of HEI operation also includes the opinion of students on the quality of the teaching.

Accrediting agencies develop their own quality criteria and standards of accreditation compatible with the requirements of international accrediting agencies. Standards for institutional and specialised accreditation must comply with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG2005).

In 2015, the national agencies' revision of standards was carried out on the basis of the new version of ESG.

As described above, rules of internal quality assurance are developed by HEIs. Standards of accrediting agencies include the requirement for presence of internal quality assurance systems at HEIs.

The internal quality assurance results are the basis of the external quality assurance. The external quality assurance is based on evaluation of the current situation and compliance with pre-determined standards for accreditation.

National External Quality Assurance in Medical and Health Professions Education

The establishment of the national accreditation system on medical education in Kazakhstan was defined as a high priority in 2005. WHO/Euro and WFME supported Kazakhstan Government and National Accreditation Centre of Ministry of Education and Sciences to introduce the WHO/WFME Guidelines for Accreditation of Basic Medical Education (Geneva/Copenhagen 2005) and the WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic Medical Education at six Kazakhstan State Medical Universities.

In this regard, the new regulation framework for national external quality assurance system in higher education was developed and approved by the Government of Republic of Kazakhstan.

National Accreditation Centre of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (NAC) was established by the Decree of Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 405 dated April 29, 2005. The NAC operated and arranged its activities by the Decree of Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On approval the Rules for accreditation of educational organisations" No. 1385 dated December 29, 2007 and Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the RK on "Instruction for organisation and implementation of the accreditation of educational organisations in RK" No. 109 dated March 5, 2008.

The first cycle of institutional accreditation of Kazakhstan State Medical Universities was conducted by the National Accreditation Centre of the Ministry of Education and Sciences with the involvement of the WFME Advisers and AMSE.

Since 2005, considerable progress has been made in national quality assurance and accreditation system in higher education, mainly after Kazakhstan joined the Bologna Process in 2010.

Given this changing context in 2012, according to the Law on Education (with amendments), accreditation in higher education has been conducted by non-governmental organisations which are authorized by the Ministry of Education and Sciences and registered on National Recognised Accrediting Agencies Register (Register 1).

The WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic Medical Education were translated in Kazakh and Russian, and national specifications of accreditation standards, based on WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic Medical Education, were identified.

In 2009, these national standards, based on the European Specifications to the WFME Global Standards, were adopted and published. The set of standards used the WFME Global Standards in BME with 9 areas 36 sub-areas. With a few exemptions, all standards for quality development were considered as basic standards.

National Standards for Institutional Accreditation, based on the WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic Medical Education, were reviewed by the international experts from Canada and some sub-areas were suggested for improvement: 1. competence-based educational programme; 2. feedback loop/formative assessment; 3. required clinical experience and graded responsibility of student; 4. access to the examination records and appeal process; 5. professionalism; 6. students' right protection (against racial discrimination, religion).

National Experts training programme was invested by WHO/Euro and the Ministry of Health and World Bank Project in 2009-2011. Assessors were well trained by WHO/ WFME in the country. This was followed by WHO/WFME training in Denmark conducted by experts from LCME, ACGME, ACCME, CSIH/Canada, it was supported by the World Bank and Ministry of Health Project. Institutional information about accredited Kazakhstan Medical Universities was validated to include to the Avicenna Directories. Currently, all updated information is available in the World Directory of Medical Schools.

The Ministry of Health was involved in WHO/WFME Strategic Partnership Project which was beneficial for new reform and quality improvement of medical education in the country.

Kazakh National Medical University and Postgraduate Faculty Karaganda State Medical Academy participated and completed Pilot Studies of WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic Medical Education and Postgraduate Medical Education.

In March 2010, Kazakhstan joined the Bologna process and agreed to establish a national quality assurance system for education. To date, work regarding medical education includes the development of accreditation standards similar to the European standards and the training of experts in accreditation in accordance with the WFME standards. In 2010, 16 experts were trained in Denmark in quality assessment in medical education. Four medical schools in Kazakhstan have undergone a WFME approach accreditation process with participation of international experts on the panel.

WFME Global Standards in BME were implemented at the Kazakhstan State Medical Universities and the WFME Senior Advisors reviewed the institutional self-evaluation reports and participated as members of the site-visit team.

WHO/WFME International initiatives in quality improvement of medical education and continued support of local Government contribute to establishment and strengthening of national accreditation system. WFME Global Standards in Basic Medical Education were adapted to the needs of undergraduate medical education programme.

This experience allowed to develop accreditation system for PGME and CPD programmes and influenced other healthcare professions education.

Currently the QAA's activities are guided by the Republic of Kazakhstan's Law "On Education" of July 27, 2007 No. 319-III (with amendments as of 2012, 2016, 04.07.2018 No. 171-VI), the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science on Recognition of Accrediting Agencies and Development of Register of Accrediting Agencies (Register 1), Accredited HEIs (Register 2) and Educational Programmes (Register 3) dated 01.11.2016 No. 629 that was updated on 04.10.2018 No. 531.

Table 1. Governmental regulations (amendments) and key considerations

Regulations	Amendments	Key considerations
The Republic of Kazakhstan's Law "On Education" of July 27, 2007 No. 319-111 (with amendments 2012, 2016, - 04.07.2018 No. 171-VI)	✓ Institutional ✓ Specialised (Programmatic) accreditation ✓ Continuum of all level of education	✓ accreditation is voluntary based ✓ accreditation is funded by HEIs ✓ HEIs and the educational programmes should be accredited to issue Degree and State Diploma, student scholarships ✓ institutional autonomy (organisational, financial, academic, staffing)
Order of the Ministry of Education and Science on Recognition of Accrediting Agencies and Development of the Register of Accrediting Agencies (Register 1), Accredited HEIs (Register 2) and Educational Programmes (Register 3) dated November 01, 2016 No. 629 ; updated on October 04, 2018 No. 531	✓ Status of Agency - Non Government Non-for Profit Organisation ✓ Standards and Guidelines ✓ Full Membership in International/Regional Associations or Networks for QA in HE in countries member of OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) ✓ Data base of trained and qualified reviewers (experts)	✓ Independence of Agency ✓ Mission ✓ Responsibility of Agency ✓ Public known decision on accreditation ✓ Submitting the information about external evaluation of a HEI for the inclusion on Register 2 ✓ or the information about external evaluation of an educational programme for the inclusion on Register 3
Republican Accreditation Council of the Ministry of Education and Science	✓ Decision on Recognition of Accrediting Agency	✓ Including on the National Register of Recognised Accrediting Agencies No. 1 of the Ministry of Education and Science

The quality assurance agencies submit the annual report about their activities and accredited HEIs and educational programmes to the Ministry of Education and Science by July 10th every year.

4. History, profile and activities of the agency

ECAQA is a non-governmental non-profit organisation that aims to ensure the quality of higher education and quality of training of health professionals, promote the establishment and sustainable development of national and regional effective, reliable, transparent quality assurance system in higher education as well as medical and other healthcare professions education in Kazakhstan.

ECAQA was established and started its operation as quality assurance agency in higher education including medical and other healthcare professions education on February 3, 2017.

ECAQA is recognised by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and included on the National Register of Recognised Accrediting Agencies (Register 1).

The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan endorsed the ECAQA Standards and Guidelines for Accreditation in Medical (Basic, Postgraduate Medical Education and CPD of Medical Doctors) and Healthcare Professions Education (Applied Bachelor, Bachelor, Master's Degree, PhD) by the Official Letter No.06-1-15/23395 dated October 1, 2018.

ECAQA is listed on the Directory of Organisations that Recognize/Accredit Medical Schools (DORA) of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER), USA. ECAQA, as a specialised/professional accreditation agency in medicine,

biomedicine and health sciences, is included on the Council for Higher Education Accreditation International Quality Group (CHEA/CIQG) International Directory focused on accreditation and quality assurance.

Taking into consideration the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science Policy in internationalization and enhancing the quality assurance in higher education, and in order to support the international students from Asian countries, studying at national public and private universities in the country, ECAQA was externally evaluated by APQR/APQN's Review Panel and registered on the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR) in December 2019.

The Board of ENQA granted ECAQA Affiliate status of ENQA on October 25, 2017. ECAQA is a Full Member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA), Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), ENQA Affiliate, the Member of the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG). ECAQA has signed the Memorandum of Affiliation: Promotion Partnership in Quality Assurance to implement CHEA's International Quality Principles (2015) at the higher education institutions in Kazakhstan and CIS as well.

ECAQA actively collaborates with a wide range of partners. The Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Association of Medical Schools in Europe (AMSE), JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Finland, (Nursing Education and Science), Indian Medical Council and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), ANQA (Armenia), NCPA and Russian Register (Russian Federation), EQAA (Germany), HAC (Hungary), the State Organisation "Testing Board for Professional Competence Assessment of Higher Education Trainees in Medicine and Pharmacy at the Ministry of Health of Ukraine", the Association of Medical Societies for Quality (ASMOK), Russian Federation and the Professional Associations in Clinical Specialities and Healthcare Professions, Kazakhstan Alliance of Hospitals and Healthcare Providers, National Centre for Independent Examination and the Kazakhstan Medical Students Association (KazMSA) that is Full member of the International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA).

Since March 2018, ECAQA has established collaboration and signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Professional Associations for Healthcare Professionals: Kazakh Cancer Society, Kazakh Society of Nephrologists, the United Kazakhstan Association of Dentists, Kazakhstan Association of Medical Laboratory Diagnostics, Kazakhstan Association of Urology, Professional Association of Clinical Pharmacologists and Pharmacists of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Associations of Cardiologists of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan Union of Nursing Colleges. These health care professionals' associations nominate the experts to ECAQA External Expert Commissions to be mostly involved in institutional accreditation of CPD Providers and Postgraduate Specialty Training Clinics as well as to provide the feedback concerning the Standards for Accreditation of CPD Providers/Programmes.

ECAQA external quality assurance activities are based on the fundamental principles of the World Health Organisation and World Federation for Medical Education (WHO/WFME) Guidelines for Accreditation of Basic Medical Education (2005) as well as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and involvement of principal stakeholders in external and internal quality assurance.

ECAQA's Standards for Institutional and Specialised (Educational Programme) accreditation are harmonized with ESG2015, Part I and based on medical education and other healthcare professions education specific standards such as: the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic, Postgraduate Medical Education and CPD, Master's Degree programmes (2015), Organisation for PhD Education in Biomedicine and Health Sciences in the European System (ORPHEUS), Association of Medical Schools in Europe (AMSE) and WFME (2015), WHO Global standards for the initial education of professional nurses and midwives (2009) that include the higher education institutions and National Health Care System' needs and priorities.

The agency carries out external evaluation of higher education institutions and their educational programmes on a regular cyclical basis that is five years.

Mission: Ensuring the introduction of international quality principles and standards for quality assurance and enhancement of quality of higher education, given the needs of the national education and healthcare systems and with the involvement of all stakeholders to maintain public confidence.

Vision: The leading accrediting agency that fosters regional quality assurance in higher education and healthcare professionals' training improvement to ensure their achievement of competencies and professionalism to meet the needs of community.

ECAQA operates on the basis of the following principles: independence, confidentiality, stakeholder involvement, public information, and its values: voluntariness/freedom, responsibility, integrity, transparency, efficiency, collaboration and partnership.

Principles:

Independence – the agency is independent in developing accreditation standards and quality criteria, the external evaluation and decision–making process based on the published standards and procedures taking into consideration of the outcomes both the institutional self–assessment and external evaluation, the reliable information and database. External evaluation report's conclusion and recommendations for improvement of higher education institution or educational programme cannot be changed by any third party.

Confidentiality – confidentiality principles regarding the received information and data on an educational organisation; providing a report on institutional self–evaluation and/or self–evaluation of an educational programme and other information or data about the university only to members of the External Evaluation Commission and the Accreditation Council of ECAQA.

Stakeholder involvement – the categories of principal stakeholders that are involved in the agency's external quality assurance processes and activities is clearly identified, the agency ensures engagement of relevant stakeholders in internal and external quality assurance as well as revision of accreditation standards and relevant procedures taking into account the results of feedback received from them;

Public information – the agency provides basic public information about accreditation standards and procedures and accreditation status of higher education institutions. Decisions on accreditation are announced and made public, they are posted on the QA agency's website and national authority entity in quality assurance in higher education.

Values:

Voluntariness/Freedom – institutional/programmatic accreditation is voluntary, peer–review process of quality assurance, and QAA recognizes the academic freedom and institutional autonomy of higher education institutions.

Responsibility – clearly defined responsibility of QAA and higher education institutions, and the involvement of principal stakeholders, provision of appropriate resources for innovation and training reviewers/experts.

Integrity – the agency maintains and encourages relationship with higher education institutions and/or programmes they accredit and respects their institutional autonomy and integrity. Its operations and judgements are based on the ethical principles and values, external and internal quality assurance expertise and practice, acting within published standards and procedures.

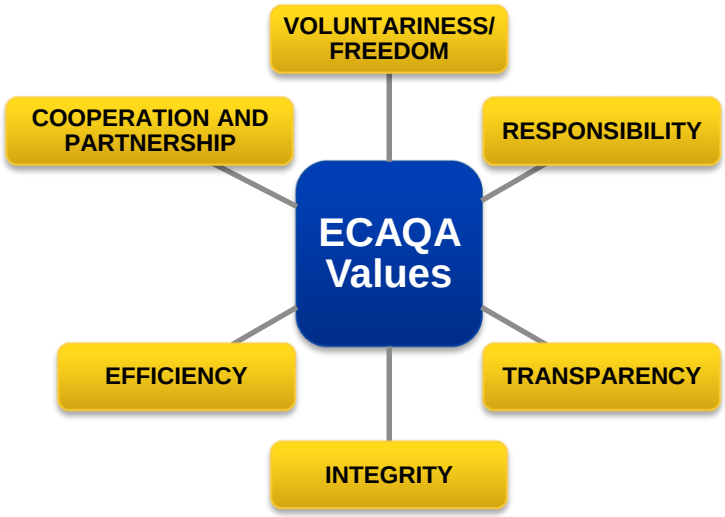
Transparency – self–assessment and external evaluation process are carried out fairly and transparently, providing access to relevant information that is available for principal stakeholders

Efficiency – external evaluation is based on international quality principles and established standards that are focused on process, content, and outcomes that allowed improving internal quality assurance mechanisms, support the development of a quality culture and ensure the link between IQA and EQA

Cooperation and Partnership – the agency recognizes that the primary goal is to enhance the institutional quality assurance and academic quality. This is encouraged by strong relationship with higher education institutions and effective collaboration with partnerships organisations, international/ regional associations in quality assurance in higher education.

Figure 2. ECAQA's Mission, Vision and Values

Mission	Vision
Ensuring the introduction of international quality principles and standards for quality assurance and enhancement of quality of higher education, given the needs of the national education and healthcare systems and with the involvement of all stakeholders to maintain public confidence.	The leading accrediting agency that fosters regional quality assurance in higher education and healthcare professionals' training improvement to ensure their achievement of competencies and professionalism to meet the needs of community.

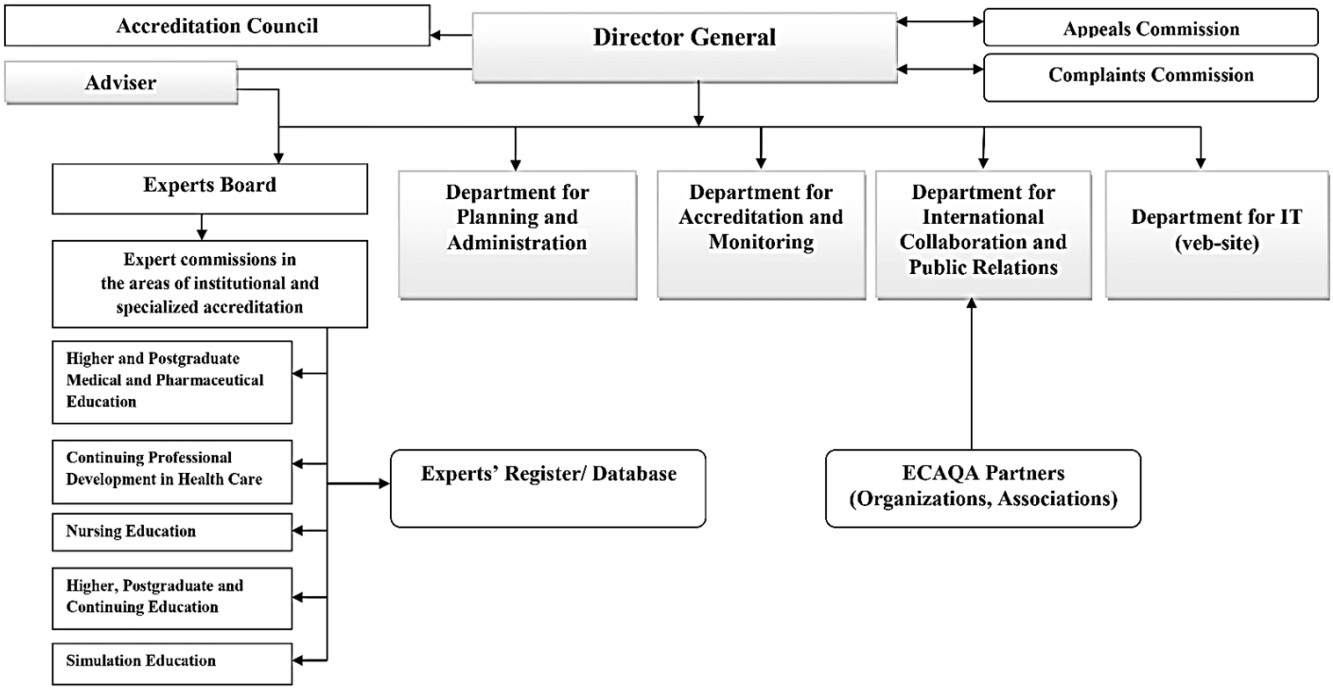


The main priorities of the ECAQA are:

- academic quality assurance and improvement;
- support of higher education institutions in their capacity building process;
- introduction of the quality culture in institutions;
- provision of the educational expertise in higher education, health professions education and public health;
- provision of all stakeholders with the relevant information about the quality of the higher education institutions and programme seeking accreditation.
- making a contribution towards the harmonisation and integration of national education system into the European Higher Education and Research Area.

ECAQA Organisational Chart

Figure 3. ECAQA Organisational Chart (2021)



The QA agency' staff profile. The ECAQA has its organisational structure of governance that is approved by the ECAQA Expert Board.

Accrediting agency staff and experts' (reviewers) responsibilities and scope of their work are defined by the ECAQA's internal regulations and annual arrangements plan. The staff and reviewers have appropriate background and competencies, relevant training, and the agency has a policy for their professional development and maintenance of their competencies.

Director General. The Director General is nominated and appointed by the Founder for five-years in accordance with the Constitution of ECAQA.

The ECAQA's Management Office Team (7 full-time employees) is led by the Director General that consists of the Chair of Expert Board (part-time), Adviser, Chairs of the Department for Planning and Administration, Department for Accreditation and Monitoring, Department for International Collaboration, Department for IT and Public Relations and Chair of Expert Commissions

The Chairs of the ECAQA's Departments are appointed by the Director General.

According to their responsibilities and work schedule, the staff and experts of ECAQA fulfil the scope of work and contribute to the achievement of the mission and strategic goals. Job descriptions and responsibilities of the staff were defined and developed.

The staff and Expert Commissions have developed the Concept for further development and improvement of national quality assurance system in health professions education, ECAQA Strategy for Development, Roadmap and Annual Plan for achievement of the mission and strategic goals, Programme for Quality assurance and all related documents and provisions, Standards for institutional and programmes' external evaluation and Guidelines for self-evaluation of HEIs and Educational programmes relevant to specialties and level of education (Bachelor, Master's Degree programmes, PhD, Postgraduate Speciality Training (Residency), CPD, Applied Bachelor Degree Programme, Vocational Professional Training.

Accreditation Council. The ECAQA's Accreditation Council consists of 15 members who are highly esteemed and respected within the profession and international standing.

All main groups of stakeholders are represented in the Accreditation Council:

– one third of the members are drawn from the academic staff, the management and full-time senior staff of the higher education institution (HEI) and nominated by the HEI for Healthcare Professions Education;
– one third of the members are drawn from the medical profession, including physicians in hospitals, community clinics and general practice, related health professions: pharmacist, dentists, public health professionals, academic and practicing nurses are nominated by relevant professional associations;
– one third of the members are drawn from other main stakeholders, including a Member of Kazakhstan Parliament, Governmental authorities in charge of medical education and the health care system, professional associations, students.

All main groups of stakeholders are well represented in the ECAQA Accreditation Council including Member of Kazakhstan Parliament, the Ministry of Health, the WHO Executive Board Member, professional associations, senior academic staff, students. All members have their educational background in Medicine and other Healthcare Professions Education (Public Health, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Nursing) and highly esteemed and respected within the profession and international standing.

A large majority of the members have an educational background in medicine and other health professions education (Public Health, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Nursing). http://www.ecaqa.org/en/the-ecaqa-accreditation-council/

Profile of the Reviewers. The ECAQA's experts (Reviewers) are selected and nominated by the Higher Education Institutions, National Medical Associations, Healthcare and Pharmaceutical Sector's Employers, Professional Associations, Medical Research Institutions, National and International Professional Associations relating to Specialities, International Association in Health Professions Education, the World Federation for Medical Education, Students Association.

ECAQA Expert Board. ECAQA's Expert Board consists of the following Chairs of Expert Commissions for:

– Institutional accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, Higher and Postgraduate Medical and Pharmaceutical Education;
– Continuing Professional Development in Health Care (CPD providers);
– Nursing Education (Bachelor's degree Programme at the HEIs, Applied Bachelor Degree Programme, Technical Vocational Education and Training Programme at the Nursing colleges);
– Simulation Education in Healthcare;
– Higher, Postgraduate and Continuing Education (Accreditation of Educational Programmes: Bachelor's degree Programmes in Medicine, Dentistry, Public Health, Preventive Medicine, Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Technology and Industry; Master's degree Programmes in Medicine and other Healthcare Professions Education; PhD Programmes in Biomedical and Health Sciences; Residency (Postgraduate Specialties Training Programmes; CPD Programmes).

The Chair of the Expert Board is elected by the Chairs of Expert Commissions according to their joint decision. http://www.ecaqa.org/en/about-ecaqa/ecaqa-board

The Expert Board responsibilities:

– to create the agency's experts' database on the basis of compliance with qualification requirements and nominated from the appropriate organisations, including international associations and organisations;
– to develop and review the Standards and Guidelines for Institutional/Specialised (Programme) Accreditation based on feedback from principal stakeholders;
– to contribute to the development and updating of internal regulations and instructions related to external and internal quality assurance;
– to conduct the training of experts (academic experts, employers, students);
– to review the external quality assurance activities and internal quality assurance mechanisms and internal regulations to propose the actions for improvement;
– to involve administrative and academic staff of HEIs, employers and researchers as ECAQA experts in the accreditation process and external evaluation of HEIs and/or educational programmes;

– to develop proposals for improving institutional processes and internal quality assurance mechanisms in HEIs and improving educational programmes on the basis of findings and recommendations of the external evaluation by the site-visit team.

The following documents have been developed and peer reviewed by the ECAQA's Board and relevant Experts Commissions: 14 Standards for accreditation including standards for institutional (3) and subject-specific professional accreditation (11) of educational programmes in Medical and other Healthcare Professions Education; 11 Guides to Self-evaluation of HEIs and Medical and Healthcare Education Programmes; 2 Guides to external evaluation including the Interim Guidelines for External Evaluation during COVID-19, Guidelines for Report Preparation of the External Expert Commission, and 14 Quality Profiles and Evaluation Criteria Forms for HEIs and Educational Programmes.

ECAQA Activities. The ECAQA's Constitution defines the area of its responsibility and activities related to external quality assurance of higher education institutions and educational programmes and carrying out institutional and specialised (programmatic) accreditation.

1) Institutional accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, including a) higher education institutions for health professions education; b) postgraduate medical education institutions; c) organisations for continuing professional development (CPD providers); d) higher nursing colleges; e) non-medical higher education institutions.

2) Specialised (programmatic) accreditation of Bachelor' Degree, Master's Degree, PhD, Postgraduate Speciality Training (Residency), CPD and Vocational Professional Education and Training programmes, including Basic Medical Education (General Medicine) programmes; Master's Degree programmes in medical and health professions education; PhD programmes in biomedical and health sciences; Applied Bachelor's Degree programmes in Nursing; Bachelor's Degree programmes in Nursing; Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Technology and Industry programmes; Public Health programmes; Dental Education programmes; Joint Degree programmes and accreditation of the Clinical Skills Centres (simulation-based healthcare education) of medical HEIs.

ECAQA has carried out and completed external evaluation of 33 HEIs: 2 Universities, 3 Higher Nursing Colleges, 28 National Clinical Research Centres (CPD Providers) and 164 educational programmes in Medicine and Health Sciences, Pharmacy: 5 Bachelor' Degree Programmes, 4 Master's Degree Programmes, 1 PhD programme, 32 Postgraduate Speciality Training Programmes (Residency), 107 CPD programmes, 15 Vocational Professional Education and Training.

Currently, 3 HEIs, 3 Nursing Higher Colleges, 2 CPD Providers, 1 Undergraduate Medical Education Programmes (Bachelor of Medicine + Internship), 19 Postgraduate Speciality Training Programmes (Residency), 3 Bachelor's Degree Programmes, 18 Master's Degree Programmes, 3 PhD Programmes, 24 Vocational Professional Education and Training Programmes are in process of accreditation.

Financing. ECAQA's income and expenses for January 2018 - December 2020 are reflected in the Table 2.

ECAQA has the status of a non-governmental non-profit organisation and conducts its activities including financing in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated January 16, 2001 No. 142 "On non-profit organisations", the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Civil Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

An accountant who is accountable to the Director General conducts financial transactions. However, all financial documents (invoices, contracts, work completion certificates, etc.) are signed by the Director General (Order No. 1 dated January 19, 2017).

Once every three years, the ECAQA Strategic Development Plan is developed and approved by order of the Director General, which includes the planned financial costs for a number of activities, for example, participation of ECAQA employees in international and national events (registration fees, travel expenses, accommodation), payment of membership fees, publications, external evaluations, etc.

In accordance with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Development Plan, an annual ECAQA work plan is drawn up at the end of every calendar year, and ECAQA budget plan is formed on its basis. The budget plan is agreed with the founder of ECAQA and includes several items of expenditure of funds, including salaries for employees, rent and maintenance of premises, updating office equipment, carrying out various events, implementing the tasks of the Strategic Plan. The budget plan is approved by the order of the Director General.

The main receipt of funds occurs due to the fulfilment of obligations under contracts for institutional and specialised (programmatic) accreditation.

The cost of accreditation services for higher education institutions and educational programmes is determined in the document on Regulations on the cost of the accreditation procedure (date of approval: September 03, 2018), which describes the procedure and conditions for the provision of paid accreditation services, determining the cost of accreditation services, calculating the cost of the organisation of services and conducting accreditation. Upon receipt of an application for accreditation from a HEI (an employee of the Department for Accreditation and Monitoring registers the application with the incoming document log), ECAQA sends a fee proposal signed by the Director General to the organisation seeking accreditation (an employee of the Department for Accreditation and Monitoring registers the p with the outgoing document log). The cost of accreditation services includes the following: training of the organisation's employees, consulting on the self-evaluation procedure and writing a self-evaluation report, organising and conducting the site visit, the procedure for the Accreditation Council decision-making).

Other paid services are carried out by ECAQA on the basis of the “Regulations on paid services (date of approval: April 02, 2018), which defines the procedure for the provision of paid services, the conditions for the provision of paid services, settlement terms for the provision of paid services.

Annually, at the end of the calendar year, the accountant prepares a financial report using 1C: Enterprise business application platform. The paper copy of the report is signed by the Director General of ECAQA. The financial report together with the annual report on the activities of ECAQA is delivered to the ECAQA founder for review.

5. Higher education quality assurance activities of the agency

ECAQA is responsible for carrying out both the institutional and educational programme accreditation and ensures that accredited HEIs meet ECAQA’s Standards for Institutional and Specialised (Programmatic) Accreditation based on the WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic, Postgraduate and CPD, Master and PhD programmes in Biomedicine and Health Sciences in association with ORPHEUS and AMSE (2015) as well as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG/Part 1/2015).

The key feature of State Kazakhstan Medical Universities is that each medical university is an independent higher education institution with the following faculties: Medicine, Dentistry, Public Health, Preventive Medicine, Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Technology, Nursing at all levels of education programmes: Bachelor’s, Master’s degree and PhD programmes, postgraduate specialities training programmes (residency), CPD.

Therefore, both the Standards for Institutional and Educational Programmes Accreditation which are in compliance with ESG (Part 1) must be met by Kazakhstan Medical Universities.

At the same time, the National Clinical Research and Medical Centres in Nur-Sultan and Almaty provide the postgraduate specialities training and CPD programmes for health professionals that should be accredited as the institutions of Postgraduate Medical Education and CPD Providers in the country.

The Ministry of Health endorses the purpose of the Bologna declaration that was signed by the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2010 and supports the policy that medical education, as a part of higher education, should be fully involved in the Bologna Process including the development of the national quality assurance of medical and health professions education according to the ESG and the WFME Trilogy of Global Standards (2015).

Kazakhstan Medical Universities as the signatory universities of the Magna Charta Universitatum refer to and share the same values for institutional autonomy, academic freedom and integrity. Kazakhstan State Medical Universities have established strategic partnerships with European universities from Poland, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania and other two universities from the USA. This project for strategic partnership between these universities is supported and co-financed by the Kazakhstan Ministry of Health and World Bank Project 2017-2021.

The medical universities have facilitated regional and international academic exchange of students (Bachelor, Master and PhD) and faculty, which is purposefully organised in collaboration mostly with European universities. The Kazakhstan Ministry of Health has allocated annual state budget for CPD programmes for healthcare professionals and for their specialities and sub-specialities training mostly in European countries.

ECAQA is actively involving in activities of European Networks of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (ENQA, CEENQA), which allowed to engage in cooperation to reach the Bologna process objectives by higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies.

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan has authorised and recognised 10 quality assurance agencies (6 national and 4 European agencies) that meet the requirements of Rules for recognition of accrediting agencies, including foreign ones, and formation of registers of recognized accrediting agencies, accredited higher education institutions and educational programmes, approved by the order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 629 of November 1, 2016 and updated Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan of October 4, 2018 No. 531 On approval of the Rules for recognition of accrediting agencies, including foreign ones, and formation of registers of recognized accrediting agencies, accredited higher education institutions and educational programmes.

file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/regulations-no-629-of-november-1-2016%20(1).pdf

https://enic-kazakhstan.kz/en/accreditation/accredited_organisations

https://enic-kazakhstan.kz/en/accreditation/informacionnaya-statistika

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan maintains a national registers of recognized accrediting agencies (Register 1), accredited higher education institutions (Register 2) and accredited educational programmes (Register 3).

Higher education institutions are subject to institutional and specialised (educational programme) accreditation that should be conducted by accrediting agencies recognized by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Table 3. Higher Education Institutions and Educational programmes accredited by the ECAQA in 2018-2020

Types of accreditation	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	
				Accredited (26.01.2021)	**In progress (1-2 Quarter)**
Institutional accreditation					
Higher Education Institutions	1	1			3
Higher Nursing Colleges		1	1	1	3
CPD Providers (National Clinical and Research Centres)		25	3		2
Total	**1**	**27**	**4**	**1**	**8**
Programmatic accreditation					
Vocational Professional Education and Training		4	9	2	24
Applied bachelor's degree programmes in Nursing			2		3

Bachelor's degree programmes		4	1		4
Master's degree programmes		3	1		18
Residency programmes (postgraduate specialities training)			32		19
PhD programmes			1		3
CPD programmes		2	105		
Total	**1**	**13**	**109**	**3**	**48**

6. Processes and their methodologies

The main steps of the ECAQA quality assurance activities and their methodologies

ECAQA's key elements of external quality assurance and processes are well developed, transparent and publicly available.

External quality assurance and evaluation process includes following elements: 1) submission of application to QAA; 2) eligibility criteria and access to external evaluation; 3) conducting institutional self-evaluation/ educational programme self-evaluation with student participation; 4) submitting the self-evaluation report to QAA; 5) External Expert Commission's site-visit at the HEI; 5) development of ECAQA External Expert Commission's final external evaluation report with conclusions and recommendations for improvement; 6) decision on accreditation; 7) appeal process; 8) submission of the information about the accredited HEI and educational programme to be listed on National Register 2 and National Register 3 of the Ministry of Education and Science; 8) post-accreditation monitoring and follow up activities; 8) re-accreditation 9) standards revision and updating .

The description of ECAQA's external quality assurance process and external evaluation documents with evaluation criteria, and stakeholders' involvement are available on its web-site: http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/accreditation-process-and-procedures

The HEIs could submit the completed application form that is available on the agency's website: http://ecaqa.org/en/application-form-for-accreditation

Standards for Institutional and Educational Programmes Accreditation. The Standards for Institutional and Specialised Accreditation are aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, Part 1 2015) and based on medical education and other health professions education specific standards such as:

- World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic, Postgraduate Medical Education and CPD (2015),
- Organisation for PhD Education in Biomedicine and Health Sciences in the European System (ORPHEUS), Association of Medical Schools in Europe (AMSE) and WFME (Master and PhD Programmes 2015) that includes HEIs and National Health Care needs and priorities.

ECAQA's Standards for Institutional Accreditation (HEIs, Postgraduate Specialty Training Centres/Teaching Hospitals, CPD Providers, Higher Nursing Colleges) and Standards for Medical and other Healthcare Professions Education Programmes Accreditation, Guides to Institutional Self-Evaluation and Guides to Educational Programme Self-Evaluation related to specific health professions and levels (Bachelor, Master's Degree programmes, PhD programmes in Biomedicine and Health Sciences, Postgraduate Specialty Training (Residency), CPD programmes, Applied Bachelor Degree Programme and Vocational Professional Training in Nursing) are available on the web-site: http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/standards

The Standards for Institutional Accreditation were developed and based on the WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic Medical Education (2015) with national specifications of the healthcare system and healthcare professions education.

These Standards for Accreditation were aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

In addition, the specification of the Standards includes relevant ESG: Standard 2. Educational Programme: ESG S1.2 (NQF/EQF), ESG G1.2 (Student-Centred Learning /ECTS); Standard 3. Assessment: ESG S 1.4 (Recognition of qualification; Lisbon Recognition Convention; ENIC/NARIC); Standard 6. Educational Resources: ESG 1.9 (Create Supportive and Effective Learning Environment for Student); Standard 7. Programme Evaluation: ESG S1.7 (Programme management and other activities); Standard 8. Governance and Administration: ESG S1.8 (Public Information; Graduate Employment Information); Standard 9. Continuous Renewal: ESG S1.10 (Cyclical EQA)

The new generation of the Standards for accreditation of undergraduate medical education programmes are based on the WFME standards for Quality Improvement in Basic Medical Education (2015) which have been adapted to the local needs and national context of Kazakhstan. These Standards refer to the legal and regulatory system in which the higher education institution must operate. This adaptation of the WFME Standards that reflects the legal and regulatory system is comprehensive and complete.

References to the legislation or regulatory agencies are clearly documented in the Normative references for each section of standards and within specific standards.

The Standards for Accreditation in Basic Medical Education (Bachelor + Internship) was endorsed by the Ministry of Health (2018) as well as the Standards for PGME (Specialty Training Programmes), CPD, Master's Degree, PhD, Applied Bachelor Degree's Programme, Vocational Training Programme.

ECAQA implemented the Standards for PhD programme accreditation that are based on the ORPHEUS-AMSE–WFME Standards for PhD education in Biomedicine and Health Sciences in Europe (Revision 2016) and Best Practices for PhD Training Based on the ORPHEUS – AMSE – WFME Standards for PhD Education in Biomedicine and Health Sciences in Europe, First published 2016 by ORPHEUS/AMSE to ensure that the competencies of PhD candidates are globally applicable and transferable and readily accessible and transparent documentation of the levels of quality of educational institutions and their programmes is essential.

The Standards for Institutional Accreditation of Higher Education Institution are based on ESG 2015 and the Standards are available on the agency's web-site:

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/institutional-accreditation

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Zs0wXG_2NOXucurtj6IpoJm41PZV_sWe?usp=sharing

The Guides to Institutional Self-Evaluation are available on the ECAQA's web-site:

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/institutional-accreditation

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/specialised-programme-accreditation

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yAUBlHkpMBzmj5OWlvnbnnH6HWf2R2Jr?usp=sharing

Students as members of self-evaluation commission at a HEI and the agency's External Expert Commission participate in internal quality assurance and external quality assurance of higher education in accordance with ECAQA's Guides and Instructions for student involvement in accreditation process.

Information about student involvement in accreditation process and Guide to Role of Students in accreditation are available on the web-site:

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/students/about-accreditation

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/students/students-involvement

Standards for Accreditation of Clinical Skills Centres. Standards for Accreditation and Guide to Self-Evaluation of Simulation Centres in Medicine and Healthcare are based on an analysis of international best practice in simulation-based learning and simulation-based programme evaluation methodology in accordance with the institutional needs and priorities of medical education, nursing education, healthcare system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The quality assurance agency applies these Standards to conduct external evaluation in order to ensure quality and implementation the principles of international best practice and achievements in the area of

simulation technologies, promote the development of a professional community in the simulation-based education and provide the patient safety.

Self-evaluation and external evaluation are carried out according to 9 core Standards for Accreditation: 1. Mission and Governance; 2. Programme Management; 3. Assessment and Documentation; 4. Resource Management; 5. Human Resources; 6. Trainees; 7. Programme Evaluation; 8. Integrity and Safety; 9. Continuous Renewal.

ECAQA is the holder of executive copyright to its Standards and Guidelines for Institutional and Programmatic accreditation (Bachelor, Master's, PhD, Postgraduate Specialty Training (Residency), CPD, Applied Bachelor in Nursing) for higher education and medical, other healthcare professions that have been registered and granted by the Kazakhstan Ministry of Justice.

ECAQA's External Expert Commission (EEC). ECAQA experts (Reviewers) are well trained and highly esteemed and respected within the profession, most of them are with international standing and have an educational background in relevant professions including medicine, biomedicine, clinical research and educational expertise in other healthcare professions.

ECAQA's External Expert Commission (EEC) (Reviewers) consists of 5-6 Members and includes: Chair of EEC, National Academic Experts, International Expert, Employer, Student. Two International Experts are involved as members of the EEC during site visits at the National Universities. EEC is supported and coordinated by the representative (coordinator) from the ECAQA.

The experts' activities and involvement in external evaluation are based on the Regulations on External Expert Commission which were approved by ECAQA'S Expert Board Order No.4 on February 13, 2017.

In order to response to the COVID-19's challenges and ensure the same quality of external evaluation procedures, the Guidelines for external evaluation during the times of COVID-19 were developed and adopted as well as 9 on line training sessions for 30 experts were conducted in June 2020.

ECAQA's EEC Members are nominated by the Higher Education Institutions, National Chamber of Health Care, National and International Professional Association relating to Specialities, International Association in Health Professions Education, Kazakhstan Association of Hospitals, the World Federation for Medical Education, Student's Association and Kazakhstan Nursing Colleges Union and partnership QAA from EU, Russia Federation, Armenia, Moldova, Uzbekistan.

The higher education institutions seeking institutional or educational programmes accreditation are given the opportunity to consider the conflict of interest with any of the proposed experts of the EEC.

ECAQA'S Experts (Reviewers) carry out the institutional and educational programmes accreditation according to approved Guides to external evaluation of higher educational institutions and educational programmes and evaluation criteria which are available on the web-site: http://www.ecaqa.org/en/external-evaluation

The Members of External Experts Commission (Reviewers) including the international experts and students sign the ECAQA's Code of conduct for External Review Experts and experts are required to notify the ECAQA in written about any of conflict of interest before their site-visit at HEIs. http://www.ecaqa.org/en/code-of-expert

Also, the experts are notified that the institutional self-evaluation report's information and other relevant information provided by HEIs or gained during external review (interviews) are confidential.

ECAQA Experts Register/ Database. The ECAQA's Expert Board selects and updates the Expert's (Reviewers) Database on basis of compliance with their academic qualification and experience in quality assurance in higher education, requirements for nomination, their training and competencies in quality assurance in higher and postgraduate education, CPD.

The database of trained experts with a wide range of professional experience, expertise in higher education and external quality assurance are created and updated.

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/ecaqa-s-expert-qualification-requirements

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/the-external-expert-commission

The database of experts that includes 460 experts (reviewers) nominated by higher educational and health organisations from among academic staff and clinical teachers of medical universities, institutes and research centres, nursing colleges, professional associations, employers, student's' organisations, including 144 experts nominated by 22 non-medical HEIs, has been formed.

In order to ensure that the experts are qualified in their professions, well experienced and trained as reviewers, the agency provides training courses on quality assurance in higher education, standards specification and interpretation for self-evaluation, external evaluation and decision on accreditation, external evaluation and report writing.

Decision on accreditation. The ECAQA Accreditation Council's decisions on accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and educational programmes are made public.

The Accreditation Council's decisions on accreditation and the external evaluation reports are posted on ECAQA's official website and the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science's Centre of Bologna Process/ ENIC-NARIC KAZAKHSTAN's website.

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/register-of-accredited-hei-pge-cpd-olleges/institutional-accreditation1/hei-s

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/register-of-accredited-hei-pge-cpd-olleges/institutional-accreditation1/cpd-organisation

https://enic-kazakhstan.kz/en/accreditation/organisacii-dopolnitelnogo-obrazovaniya

An appeals mechanism is available for institutions. The information about appeal procedure is available for higher education institutions on the agency's website and in the Regulations on Appeal Commission of ECAQA: http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/ecaqa-s-process-for-appeals-and-complaints

Follow up and other acclivities. ECAQA conducts post-accreditation monitoring during the entire accreditation period of the higher education institution or educational programme. Post-accreditation monitoring of the higher education institution is carried out by submitting an annual report on the implementation of the plan for improvement based on the recommendation of the External Expert Commission (Reviewers) to ECAQA.

The quality assurance agency should be informed about any substantive changes in the scope of activities of accredited higher education institutions, including the educational programmes' changes.

Also, the agency considers any complaints about the quality of accredited HEIs or educational programmes and can arrange on-site visits.

Revision and updating of the standards for institutional and educational programme accreditation. Amendments to the Standards for Accreditation are addressed for further improvement. The amendments are proposed by the quality assurance agency. If amendments to the Standards are initiated by principal stakeholders, they deliver their suggestions and comments to the agency. The agency considers all suggestions and remarks related to the Standards for Accreditation taking into account their validity and appropriateness.

The revised version of the Standards for Accreditation is adopted and approved by the Expert Board and signed by the Director General of ECAQA. The new version of Standards for Accreditation should be issued and published on the agency's website.

7. Agency's internal quality assurance

ECAQA as the quality assurance agency manages the accreditation of the higher education institutions and educational programmes including medical and other healthcare professions education to ensure that accredited higher education institutions, national research and clinical centres, higher nursing colleges, clinical skills centres meet the predetermined ECAQA's Standards

for Accreditation in compliance with the ESG and WHO/WFME Global Standards, ORPHEUS/WFME/AMSE Standards for PhD Programmes.

At the same time, ECAQA considers its internal quality assurance procedures and internal Regulations taking into account requirements of the Kazakhstan Government and authority bodies in higher education and healthcare systems as well as the State Programme of Education and Science Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2025; the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2018), Law regarding amendments to several legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the expansion of academic and institutional autonomy of higher education institutions, the Code of Health and Healthcare System in Kazakhstan 2020, the State Programme for National Healthcare System Development. The agency is responsive to national and institutional changes and needs in higher professional education.

In order to improve ECAQA's external and internal quality assurance and follow the requirements of ENQA, the agency has developed and implemented the Quality Assurance Policy, Internal Quality Assurance Framework and Quality Assurance Programme.

Quality Assurance Policy	IQA Framework	Quality Assurance Programme
Link	Link	Link

The Quality Assurance Policy includes the consideration of the agency's social accountability, the effectiveness of the agency's operation and continuous improvement of the quality assurance system, the flexibility in response to the changes, and achievement of its strategic goals. Also the Quality Assurance Policy emphasises the involvement of principal stakeholders and the fact that the agency is subject to periodical external review by the international quality assurance organisations/associations.

The ECAQA regularly reviews the Quality Assurance System and procedures according to the following areas: Mission, Vision, Value, Strategy, Accountability to stakeholders (Government, Society), set of Standards and Guidelines for Internal and External Quality Assurance and external evaluation of the Higher Education Institutions, Higher Education and Health Professions Education Programmes (Bachelor, Master, PhD, Residency (postgraduate specialities training), CPD, Applied Bachelor and VET), independence of decision making, procedure for complaints and appeals, transparency and publication of reports including the data and findings, selection criteria for experts, their training and qualification, appropriate governance arrangements, as well as sufficient resources allocation, international collaboration and partnership arrangements that are focused on continuous improvement.

The ECAQA's IQA procedures are described on the agency's Quality Assurance Programme that is available on the website: http://www.ecaqa.org/en/about-ecaqa/ecaqa-quality-assurance-programme

Evaluation of Internal Quality Assurance includes internal and external feedback received from higher education institutions, ECAQA's External Expert Commission, Students, Exerts training satisfaction, and reflections.

8. Agency's international activities

8.1 MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Since 2017, in order to introduce the best foreign practices in quality assurance in education and accreditation into its activities, the accrediting agency has been a Full Member of the following networks: 1) International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) https://www.inqaahe.org/full-members-list?page=3; 2) the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA) https://www.ceenqa.org/members/full-members/kazakhstan ; 3) Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) https://www.apqn.org/aqpn-members/list/alpha/e https://www.apqn.org/aqpn-members/579-the-eurasian-entre-for-accreditation-and-quality-assurance-in-higher-education-and-health-care-ecaqa; 4) International Quality Group of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) https://www.chea.org/ciqg-membership-list, https://www.chea.org/chea-ciqg-memorandum-

of-affiliation; 5) Affiliate member of The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/members-area/enqa-affiliates.

ECAQA's membership certificates	Link

ECAQA staff and experts take an active part in the activities in order to collaborate as a membership agency in the international and regional networks/associations in quality assurance in higher education from 2017 to the present. ECAQA implements the principles and mechanisms of external and internal quality assurance recommended by these organisations and international best practice of quality assurance in higher education. The interest of ECAQA is evidenced by the publication of an article on the accreditation process in Kazakhstan during the pandemic in the CEENQA Newsletter. https://www.ceenqa.org/wp-content/uploads/CEENQA-Newsletter_December_2020_version_12-07.pdf

The ability to use open resources published on the official websites of the international and European networks for quality assurance allows ECAQA to improve its external evaluation procedures, including the actions during emergency situations, and strengthen the internal quality assurance mechanisms. In 2020, ECAQA developed and put into effect the Interim Guidelines for the External Evaluation of Higher education institutions and Educational Programmes (approved by order of the Director General No. 8 dated June 01, 2020). The application of this Guideline is limited to a state of emergency and is a summary of the external evaluation procedure in a state of emergency.

ECAQA's activity in relation to APQN-initiated research, document development, and conference presentations allowed ECAQA Adviser Dr Farida Nurmanbetova to join the APQN Board (APQN Board Elected Member, https://www.apqn.org/apqn/the-board) and to be invited as a speaker at the APQN 8th On-line Forum "Influence of COVID-19 on Quality Assurance: The new normal of Higher Education 4.0" with presentation "Digitalization of Quality Assurance: will this be the new normal for QA?". This presentation is focused on the new approaches and values, practical implication of the digital technologies in external quality assurance and consideration how Quality Assurance Agencies use these technologies to appropriately respond to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 outbreak.

In addition, the ECAQA assisted in conducting a sociological survey of employees of Kazakhsta higher education institutions during the pandemic on the effectiveness of distance learning, adaptation of students and educators to new challenges, as well as approaches to external assessment during the pandemic, which was conducted by APQN in the summer of 2020.

Since 2017, ECAQA has been an affiliate member of The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/members-area/enqa-affiliates.

To date, ECAQA has participated in all of the annual ENQA General Assemblies and also took part in online surveys. The framework of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015) was adopted as a basis for the development of the ECAQA Standards for accreditation of higher and postgraduate education organisations. The Standards for accreditation of medical programmes and organisations were also harmonized with the ESG Standards. ECAQA considers membership in international and European networks for quality assurance as a useful practice for developing internal quality assurance documentation and operations.

Thus, the ECAQA Strategic Roadmap for 2020-2022 and annual plans include the following objectives: 4) To provide a quality assessment of technical and vocational post-secondary, as well as higher and continuing education in healthcare by involving experts from recognized European and international quality assurance agencies in medical, pharmaceutical, and nursing education; and 6) To develop national and international cooperation in institutional and specialised (programmatic) accreditation.

8.2 INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

During participation in international events and conferences of international and European networks for quality assurance, ECAQA ensures its international cooperation. The objective related to expansion of international cooperation by signing official Memoranda and the recognition of ECAQA in the global education and quality assurance is included in the Strategic Development Plans of ECAQA for 2017-2019 and 2020-2022.

At the beginning of its operation, ECAQA signed 1 Memorandum (with CHEA/CIQG, USA). In 2018, the agency signed 2 Memoranda, and after the start of active work on the preparation and accreditation of higher education institutions and their educational programmes, 7 Memoranda were signed. In 2020, despite difficult conditions in the world, ECAQA signed 4 Memoranda of Understanding. The collaboration within the Memorandum is carried out after preliminary preparation: studying the web resources of a potential partner, sending letters with a proposal for cooperation, holding online meetings to discuss the goals and objectives of cooperation, approving the final version of the Memorandum in two languages (English/Kazakh or Russian), signing the Memorandum (offline or online) and development of the joint Action Plan.

Cooperation with foreign organisations, associations and accrediting agencies includes the development of plans for joint work to achieve the goals and objectives of the ECAQA Strategic Development Plan. The main areas of cooperation are the following: 1) exchange of experience in the accreditation procedure; 2) ensuring an effective external evaluation of higher education institutions and educational programmes by nominating foreign experts and including them in External Expert Commissions; 3) expansion of the database of accreditation experts; 4) conducting joint training events for experts; 5) participation in project work.

As a result, in September 2018, in accordance with the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding with JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Finland), ECAQA held a 2-day workshop on "Quality assurance in nursing education". 31 representatives of 20 higher education institutions (colleges, higher medical colleges, universities) of the Republic of Kazakhstan attended the event. In 2021, cooperation with JAMK University continued within the framework of participation in the ERASMUS+ AccelEd project (Accelerating Master and PhD level nursing education development in the higher education system in Kazakhstan).

Cooperation with AppliedHE Pte Ltd (Singapore) includes a joint international webinar on AppliedHE™ XCHANGE CAR+RUSSIA (October 28, 2020). Saule Sarsenbayeva, Director General of ECAQA, acted as a speaker on the event. Currently, a project related to AppliedHE™ JOB-Ready Rating System and EMI-Ready Rating has been launched in Kazakhstan, which will further ensure the preparation of students for professional activities. Thanks to the assistance of ECAQA, such universities as the Gumilyov Eurasian National University and the Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University are participating in the pilot project.

The cooperation with international partnership organisations made it possible to expand the database of international experts that currently consists of 128 people, including the Assessors of the World Federation for Medical Education (Canada, Czech Republic), representatives of the JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Finland), Taipei Medical University (Taiwan), members of professional associations and experts in assessment and accreditation from Russia, Hungary, Germany, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, India, Turkey, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Slovenia, Poland, and other countries http://www.ecaqa.org/en/news. The procedure for the nomination of experts for accreditation is carried out by sending official letters with a list of requirements for experts to partner organisations.

8.3 PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EVENTS ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

Participation in international events contributes to the improvement of ECAQA's activities by introducing best practices in the organisation and ensuring the internal quality system, adapting effective methods of the accreditation procedure, involving stakeholders in the external evaluation of higher education institutions, establishing communications with partners and colleagues, choosing topics for training events, managing paperwork, web resources and social networks, as well as exchanging experiences. Ultimately, this leads not only to the improvement of ECAQA's activities as

an accrediting agency, but also to its recognition among potential partners and clients. Since 2017, ECAQA has taken part in 28 international events (INQAAHE, ENQA, APQN, WFME, AMEE, CHEA/CIQG, QS WUR, AKKORK, AppliedHE, EQAF, AMSE, "Russian Register") not only as a participant, also as a speaker (5).

With each year of the operation, ECAQA has more opportunities to participate in more international conferences and seminars, and in 2020, ECAQA took part in 17 events in connection with the online format of international events.

The information received at international events stimulated the development of a number of new documents (Interim recommendations for external evaluation of higher education institutions and educational programmes during the pandemic, questionnaires, Article for CEENQA Newsletter), as well as updating of previously developed documents (Standards for accreditation, Guidelines for self-evaluation) and making adjustments to Work Plan for 2021.

In order to exchange experience and implement the best practices in accreditation, ECAQA staff and experts participated and involved to annually international conferences and trainings at the INQAAHE 2017/2019, APQN AAC 2017/2018/2019; ENQA GA 2018, ENQA Members' Forum 2019 in Tallinn, the World Federation for Medical Education World Conference 2019 in Seoul, Korea. http://www.ecaqa.org/en/

At the WFME2019 World Conference "Quality Assurance in Medical Education in 21st Century" Dr. Farida Nurmanbetova, ECAQA Adviser was an Invited Speaker on Symposium and introduced the Kazakhstan Experience in Establishing and Modernization of the National Medical Education Accreditation System as well as the Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Education and Health Care (ECAQA)' Strategy and Programme for Improvement Medical Education and other Healthcare Professional Education in the country.

The ECAQA representatives has participate at the International Conference of the Association for Medical Education in Europe (AMEE), which was held in Helsinki (Finland) in 2017 and participated at the workshop of the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) Recognition Programme for Accrediting Agencies: Purpose, processes, and criteria. The World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) has developed and implemented a global programme aimed at recognised agencies that accredit medical schools at an international standard. This workshop provided overview of the WFME recognition programme and an in-depth understanding of its purpose, processes, and criteria.

In collaboration with the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) workshop on accreditation in medical education for experts (reviewers) conducted by Professor Geneviève Moineau, President and CEO of the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC) and Senior Adviser of WFME in 2018 in Astana. Also Prof. Geneviève Moineau shared her experience in quality improvement undergraduate and postgraduate medical education and CPD Providers and programmes accreditation based on the best practice of the CACMS (The Committee on the Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools) and CACME (Committee on Accreditation of Continuing Medical Education). http://www.ecaqa.org/en/component/k2/item/245-seminar-of-the-senior-adviser-to-wfme-and-afmc-president-genevi-ve-moineau-on-accreditation-of-medical-education-international-and-national-contexts-and-perspectives

8.4 INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

In 2020, ECAQA in collaboration with the Union of Kazakhstan Nursing Colleges participated in the implementation of the tasks of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan and World Bank SHIP-2.3/CS-18 Social Health Insurance Project on "Consulting Services on Development of Professional Nursing Environment and Improvement of Re-Training System for Nurses":

- D-1.2. Methodological assistance to medical colleges, higher medical colleges and universities in the development and implementation of development programmes;
- WP-3. Development of educational programmes for professional development of educators of medical educational institutions and practising nurses.

The results of the implementation of the project's tasks were:

1) Development of the competencies of educators in nursing, an educational programme for the development of competencies “Nursing Educator”, a professional development programme for educators of nursing colleges, higher nursing colleges and medical universities that was approved by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan;

2) Development of instructional guidelines for designing nursing education development programmes at medical universities and colleges.

Since 2021, ECAQA as a non-governmental organisation has been included in the implementation of the ERASMUS+ AccelEd project (Accelerating Master and PhD level nursing education development in the higher education system in Kazakhstan). ECAQA is an associated partner of this project. The aim of the AccelEd project is strengthening nursing education on Master level and establishing and launching PhD nursing science in Kazakhstan through changes in policy, legal framework and institutional structures, involving ministries, universities, healthcare institutions, associations (both in healthcare and education), and international nursing communities. AccelEd focuses on modernization of policies, governance and management of higher education system in Kazakhstan on local and national levels by promoting evidence-based nursing science for improved quality of healthcare services.

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/component/k2/item/456-social-health-insurance-project

9. Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (Part 3)

9.1 ESG Standard 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Standard: Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work. To ensure the meaningfulness of external quality assurance, it is important that institutions and the public trust agencies.

ECAQA is following its mission statement and strategic goal to contribute to the establishment of a transparent and reliable national quality assurance system in higher education based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and fundamental requirements of WHO-WFME Guidelines for Accreditation of Basic Medical Education.

The agency has translated the mission statement into a Strategic Plan that was approved by the Expert Board for the next three years and the budget has been considered as well.

The Expert Board is responsible for development of the Annual Operational Plan with clear explanation of the scope of work in external quality assurance activities and other events in collaboration with the partnership organisations.

The annual ECAQA’s Action Plans are considered in the way to achieve the objectives of the Strategic plan, and all plans are approved by the Director General https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eVuUjwjZjZNpZAv2PPYba5EddgyfyyWo?usp=sharing

The principal stakeholders (government, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, employers, higher education institutions, academic staff, students’ society, professional associations and organisations) make their contribution and are involved in external quality assurance, particularly in external evaluation of higher education institutions and their educational programmes as well as in decision making process.

The involvement of stakeholders in the agency governance is ensured by the structure of ECAQA’s Expert Board, Expert Commissions and Accreditation Council that includes representatives from Kazakhstan Parliament, Ministry of Health, National and International Professional Associations, WHO Executive Committee Member, Students’ Association and Employers.

ECAQA Accreditation Council (AC) is formed on the basis of the WHO-WFME Guidelines for Accreditation of Basic Medical Education and includes 15 members http://www.ecaqa.org/en/about-ecaqa/accreditation-council

To ensure an objective and comprehensive consideration of materials based on the results of an external evaluation and make a competent decision on the status and period of accreditation of a higher education institution/educational programme, representatives of the following stakeholders have been included in the AC http://www.ecaqa.org/en/the-ecaqa-accreditation-council/:

- Government (Deputy of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/1%20Zauresh%20Dzhumanaliyevna%20Amanzholova%20.pdf)
- Authorized body in healthcare (employee of the Department of Science and Human Resources of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan http://www.ecaqa.org/en/the-ecaqa-accreditation-council/No.);
- International associations (Member of the WHO Executive Board http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/5%20Salomudin%20Jabbor%20Yusufi.pdf, Adviser to the World Federation for Medical Education/APQN Board Member http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/7%20Farida%20Nusupzhanovna%20Nurmanbetova%20.pdf);
- Foreign higher education institutions (President of Novosibirsk State Medical University, Russian Federation, Chair of the Novosibirsk Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; Chair of the Expert Council on Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Ministry of Health of the Novosibirsk Region http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/4%20Marinkin%20Igor%20Olegovich.pdf, representative of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan);
- National professional associations and unions (members of the Kazakhstan Reproductive Medicine Association http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/9%20Talgat%20Kapayevich%20Kudaybergenov%20.pdf;
- Kazakhstan Cancer Society http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/14%20Suriya%20Yertugyrovna%20Yesentayeva%20.pdf;
- President of "Sodruzhestvo" Interstate Dental Association for Cooperation in Dentistry of the CIS http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/11%20Saule%20Serikovna%20Yesembayeva.pdf;
- Chair of the Kazakhstan Union of Nursing Colleges;
- Member of the Union of Pediatricians of the Republic of Kazakhstan http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/12%20Lyazzat%20Tasbulatovna%20Yeraliyeva%20.pdf;
- President of the Association of Surgeons of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Chairman of the Board of A.N. Syzganov National Research Centre of Surgery http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/10%20Bolatbek%20Bimendeyevich%20Baymakhanov%20.pdf);
- Leading healthcare organisations (Director of the Department of Science and Education of the University Medical Centre Corporate Fund of Nazarbayev University http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/3%20Alma%20Alibekovna%20Syzdykova%20.pdf);
- Head of the Department of Medical Education Improvement of the Centre for Education and Science Development of the Republican Centre for Healthcare Development of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Deputy Chair of the National Commission for the Development of the System of Training for Nursing Specialists of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/6%20ZAURE%20ALPANOVNA%20BAYGOZhINA%20.pdf);
- Student representatives http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/16%20Dariya%20%20Yerzhanovna%20Dzhangarasheva%20%20.pdf and PhD student http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/15%20Elmira%20Asilbekovna%20Serikbayeva%20.pdf;
- The AC also includes the Director General of ECAQA http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/8%20Saule%20Sergaziyevna%20Sarsenbayeva%20%20.pdf.

External Quality Assurance activities. ECAQA is an external quality assurance agency in higher education that carries out: 1) institutional accreditation, 2) specialised (educational programme) accreditation (Bachelor, Master's Degree, PhD, Residency, CPD, VET, Applied Bachelor Degree programmes) 3) accreditation of clinical skills centres (simulation based healthcare education) of medical higher educational institutions. The agency applies pre-defined Standards for Accreditation in higher education, medicine and other healthcare professions education specific standards for accreditation, relevant Guides to Self-Evaluation both for higher education institutions and the educational programmes with database that should be completed and attached to the self-evaluation report, quality profile and external evaluation criteria forms. ECAQA publishes reports on the agency's website and informs governmental authorities about the decisions on accreditation,

receives feedback from the stakeholders (HEIs, Experts, Students, Employers, International experts), makes decisions on accreditation public known, ensures clear defined appeals and complaints procedures, post-accreditation monitoring, follow up activities and the approved ECAQA Quality Assurance Programme.

Accredited higher education institutions are monitored by the agency throughout the duration of the accreditation term which includes development of an action plan for quality improvement according to the Reviewers' recommendations, submission of follow up reports with supporting documents and provision of information about any substantive changes in scope of activities of the institution, including any educational programmes changes.

Also the agency carries out other activities: consultancy of higher education institutions, participation in joint projects in collaboration with association or partnership organisation.

Table 4. The agency's external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG

ESG Part 2	Standards for external quality assurance	ECAQA Internal QA activities and supporting documents as defined in Part 2 of the ESG
2.1	Consideration of internal quality assurance	External quality assurance activities are consistent and supported by the agency's Mission Statement and Values; Strategic plan 2022 with clear defined objectives and Budget; Annual Operational Plan and Reporting; IQA Policy and Quality Assurance Programme; Stakeholders involvement in IQA and EQA; Annual QA System analysis and follow up actions for continuous improvement. External Quality Assurance in higher education is a main activity that is authorised by the competent governmental authority and its activities regulated by the relevant legislation and national regulations
2.2	Designing methodological fit for purpose	External quality assurance process is defined by itself and relied on its own methodology that comprises the following elements: mission statement, clear vision and values, defined strategic goals and budget, approved annual operational plan and staff responsibilities and their performance, published IQA Policy, IQA Framework, QA programme, accountability of stakeholders, staff and experts training, setting up and updating the Standards and Guidelines for Self-evaluation and External Evaluation, involvement of students in accreditation process (Independent Student Analysis, Site-visit Team Member, Feedback on Standards and Process) as well as Employers and Professional Associations, independence of decision making by the Accreditation Council, follow up activities, adequate resources allocation and annual reporting about the agency's external quality assurance activities; International collaboration and partnership contribution to external and internal quality assurance; focus on continuous improvement
2.3	Implementation process	The main stages of implementation process are provided by the procedures and relevant internal regulations appropriately: Application Form and Eligibility verification; sign of the Contract for accreditation service; HEI's Staff and SAR Team members training; Standards based on internationally recognised and accepted ESG and WFME; ORPHEUS/AMSE/WHO Standards; Guides to Institutional Self-evaluation; Guides to Educational Programme Self-evaluation; Guide to Role of Students in accreditation; Instruction for students to conduct independent student analysis; Guide to External Evaluation; Guidelines for report preparation of EEC; Quality Profile and Evaluation Criteria; Regulations on Accreditation Council and decision on accreditation; Regulations on Post-Accreditation Monitoring; Feedback from HEIs and other relevant stakeholders
2.4	Peer-Review experts	The agency ensures the independence and competencies of External Expert Commissions in accordance with the Regulations on the ECAQA External Expert Commission (Reviewers); Code of Ethics, updating of Experts' Database;

		Regulation on Conflict of Interest; implementation of the Experts training programme; signed MoU between ECAQA and QAA, collaboration with International/National Associations and Organisations and nomination of experts according to clear rules; selection and formation of the composition of the expert panel that is transparent and set up by the agency
2.5	Criteria for outcomes	The agency requires that accreditation decisions are based on the compliance with pre-determined standards and the Guide for External Evaluation; Quality Profile and Evaluation Criteria; The agency informs the public about accreditation decision that is published according to the national regulations.
2.6	Reporting	Guidelines for report preparation of EEC describe the requirements for the expert panel's final report writing.
2.7	Complaints and Appeal	Appropriate method and procedures for appeals against the decision are provided by the agency, and the Regulations on Appeals Commission and Regulations on Complaints Commission are approved.

Considering these external quality assurance activities and functions, the agency clearly defines the range, scope of work that is focused on the quality assurance scheme to be applied, implementation of own methodology and related internal regulations and guidelines for the quality assurance process, managing the processes, publishing and informing about the outcome of the processes, and capacity building for quality assurance in the higher education system.

3.1 Supporting documents	
1. ECAQA Policy and Procedures for Conducting Accreditation	Link
2. Regulations on the ECAQA External Expert Commission	Link
3. ECAQA Quality Assurance Programme	Link
4. ECAQA Action Plans 2017-2021	Link
5. ECAQA Strategic Plans	Link

9.2 ESG Standard 3.2 Official status

Standard: Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

Since February 3, 2017, the Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care Non-Profit Organisation (ECAQA) has been established and commenced operations as a legal entity for quality assurance in tertiary and post-secondary education after registration with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

ECAQA was registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Government Level) and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan's Department of Justice in Almaty as a non-governmental and non-profit organisation on February 3, 2017.

The certificates of registration as the non-governmental, non-profit organisation for activity and service in higher education are the legal basis for its activity as an external quality assurance agency in tertiary education, short-cycle tertiary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (according to the ISCED 2011) in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

According to the Kazakhstan Government's Regulation, the ECAQA's Certificate of Registration of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan and ECAQA's Constitution defines the area of its responsibilities as the external quality assurance in higher education including carrying out institutional and specialised (educational programmes) accreditation.

The Certificate of Registration with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 101001189335585 (Governmental level) and at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan's Department of Justice in Almaty No. 170240005010 for education services: for external quality assurance in education, notary authorized and translated into English are attached to the SAR.

ECAQA's Constitution (Excerpt) is available on the website: http://www.ecaqa.org/en/about-ecaqa/documentation/constitution

ECAQA has been recognised by the decision of the Republican Accreditation Council of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan since March 5, 2018, and it was included on the National Register of Recognised Accrediting Agencies (Register 1) by the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science' Order No. 95 on March 13, 2018.

The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan endorsed the standards and external evaluation procedures that are applied to IQA and EQA of public and private medical higher education institutions, national clinical and research centres, nursing colleges in the country.

The agency in collaboration with the Professional Associations in Medicine and Dentistry, Nursing, Public health and Association "Kazakhstan Medical Council" contribute to the revision and development of the national regulations in higher professional education to response to healthcare professions education and healthcare delivery needs. Also, the agency as a Member of the Republican Methodical and Education Council submits the outcomes of external evaluation of HEIs, CPD providers, and Educational Programmes in order to discuss the concerns and recommendations for improvement that are accepted by this authority and the leadership of higher education institutions.

3.2 Supporting documents	
1. ECAQA's Certificate of Registration with the Ministry of Justice of the RK No. 10100204761572, 23.05.2017	Link
2. ECAQA's Certificate of Registration with the Justice Department of Almaty City No. 10100189338881, 07/02/2017	Link
3. Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science's Recognition Letter to ECAQA, 15.03.2018	Link
4. ECAQA's Certificate of Registration with the Ministry of Justice of the RK No. 10100376692519, as of January 12, 2020 (Russian version)	Link

9.3 ESG Standard 3.3 Independence

Standard: Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence. Autonomous institutions need independent agencies as counterparts.

Organisational independence. ECAQA is an independent non-governmental, non-for-profit organisation for quality assurance in higher education and healthcare professions education according to its Constitution and authorization by registration with the Kazakhstan Ministry of Justice (Government Level).

The status of the ECAQA as accrediting agency is defined by the Republic of Kazakhstan's Law "On Education" of 27, July 2007 No. 319-III (with amendments as of 2012, 2016, 04.07.2018 No.171-VI) and the Ministry of Education and Sciences' Order on Recognition of Accrediting Agencies and Development of Register of Accrediting Agencies No.629, Article 4.,p.16-17, of November 1, 2016 updated as of 04.10.2018 No. 531 and includes the status of the Quality Assurance Agency with autonomy of its operations.

ECAQA was sponsored by the INTERMED Company LLP as a Founder, at the initial stage of the agency's operation and currently the agency is independent in finance and other resources/facilities issues, its activities and collaboration with partnership organisations.

The INTERMED Company LLP is a private, independent healthcare organisation with a team of healthcare professionals. Since March 2018, ECAQA has received national recognition by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (http://ecaqa.org/en/about-ecaqa/about-ecaqa), started accreditation activities and switched to self-financing, which is reflected in the budget plan and annual and quarterly financial reports are submitted to tax authorities.

The agency has a clear line of responsibility and authority for budget planning and allocation of the resources necessary for its activities in external quality assurance and needs. The budgetary

plan is transparent, and budgetary practice is based on the internal regulations for the agency's main activities.

The ECAQA allocates annual budget and resources for activities according to its strategic plan for three years and annual Action Plan that is regularly revised to meet the needs and achieve its mission.

Workplaces for staff and experts are equipped (PC, laptops, copy facilities and printers, telephone, software for managing, documentations and database) for the agency's operations, and the employees are supported through staff development programme.

Operational independence. The agency is independent in developing its principles, set of Standards and Guidelines for HEI and Educational Programmes, specific Standards and Guidelines for Medical, Dental, Nursing, Public Health and Pharmaceutical Education, accreditation procedures' manual and guidelines for external quality assurance process including on-site-visit team report's conclusions.

ECAQA External Expert Commission (Reviewers) applies pre-determined and specific Standards for quality assurance in higher education, medical and other healthcare professions education, external evaluation guidelines and quality profile/evaluation criteria related to each standard that is approved by the ECAQA's Expert Board. Moreover, the agency provides and uses feedback from HEIs and Leader of External Expert Commission.

Conclusion and recommendations for improvement of HEIs or educational programmes, which are reflected in the ECAQA's External Expert Commission's (Reviewers) Report, cannot be changed by any third party.

Independence of formal outcomes. ECAQA Accreditation Council's decision making operates independently and accreditation decision is based on compliance with the standards and information included in external evaluation report that is appropriately discussed.

A key ethical element of the agency's quality assurance policy is the fact that the experts who contribute to external evaluation process have signed the Code of conduct for Expert and act in personal capacities and responsibilities during the external evaluation and make conclusion regarding the on-site visit.

The ECAQA Accreditation Council's decision on accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and health professions educational programmes are made public.

According to the Republic of Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Sciences' Order of No.629/Article 4./p.16-17, dated November 1, 2016 and updated on 04.10.2018 No. 531 the accrediting agency's decision on accreditation of HEI and its educational programmes should be posted on the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science's Centre of Bologna Process/ ENIC-NARIC KAZAKHSTAN's website.

In order to complete an accredited professional educational programme, students can go directly to the quality assurance agencies' website to verify that the required educational programme, which they are considering, is listed on the website as "accredited".

3.3 Supporting documents	
1. The ECAQA's Constitution (Excerpt) (available on the web-site)	Link
2. ECAQA's Certificate of Registration with the Ministry of Justice of the RK No. 10100204761572, 23.05.2017	Link
3. Regulations on the External Expert Commission (Reviewers)	Link
4. ECAQA Code of Conduct for External Review Experts	Link
5. Regulations on the Accreditation Council	Link
6. Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct for a Member of the Accreditation Council	Link
7. Published external evaluation reports and decisions on accreditation (available on the ECAQA's web-site)	Link (HEIs) Link (CPD)

8. Budget Plans 2018-2021	Link

9.4 ESG Standard 3.4 Thematic analysis

Standard: Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

An analysis of the agency's activities, that includes: an annual report on its activities; an external evaluation of higher education institutions and educational programmes; reports that include the findings of the external quality assurance activities; an analysis of feedback from higher education institutions, is carried out by relevant ECAQA's Expert Commissions (Bachelor, Master's degree, PhD, Postgraduate Specialities Training programmes (Residency), CPD) and discussed at the Expert Board meeting. Also the opinion of experts before and after training at workshops on accreditation and external evaluation in medical and nursing education is studied and posted on the agency's website.

Annual Report includes the agency's activities in internal and external quality assurance and staff and experts' participation in international events and the benefits for further development of its capacity. This report that reflects the agency's good practice is submitted to the MES PK by July, annually. Link to ECAQA Reports

Institutional accreditation of CPD providers in healthcare has begun since the beginning of 2019 in connection with the introduction of the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (amendments and additions to the "Law on Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan" dated July 4, 2018) and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan (order No. 595 dated October 31, 18).

Currently, 28 CPD organisations have been accredited by the ECAQA.

In connection with that, ECAQA has initiated and completed the following report regarding the analyses of the findings of external evaluation of 22 CPD providers (National Research and Clinical Centres).

Title of Report	**Key findings and areas for improvement**	**Recommendations/Actions**
Analysis of the results of institutional self-assessment report and external evaluation report of organisations for continuing professional development (CPD) (October 2019) **Link to the Report**	Based on the results of analysis of self-evaluation and external evaluation reports of organisations which have been institutionally accredited, the most difficult standards for describing institutional activities were identified: 1.4.1, 2.1.7, 4.4.2, 5.1.1, 5.2.2, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4. 6.4.2, 8.3.2, 8.3.3	It was recommended to arrange workshops for accredited CPD Providers (which was arranged in December 2019), focusing on their needs and supporting implementation of national Regulations in CPD, ECAQA's CPD Standards based on the WFME Global Standards for QI in CPD of Doctors 24 participants from 17 CPD providers, which had been accredited by the ECAQA, participated in the workshops

On December 13, 2019, the workshop on "Quality Assurance for Continuing Professional Education in Health Care" was conducted for representatives of organisations providing continuing medical and nursing education, which had been accredited by ECAQA. The ECAQA provided the training on CPD management and regulations, the requirements of new national Code on Health and Healthcare System for 24 participants (leaders and faculty, participating doctors) from 17 organisations, including national research clinical centres, research institutes, private organisations from the cities of Almaty, Nur-Sultan, Karaganda, Taraz, Pavlodar, Aktobe.

The second report is focused on the findings of Residency programmes that were analysed to develop the recommendations for improvement of Postgraduate Specialties Training programmes.

Title of Report	Key findings and areas for improvement	Recommendations
Analytical Report of Results External Experts Evaluation of Postgraduate Specialties Training Programme (Residency) in Compliance with ECAQA's Standards for Accreditation of Residency Programmes (includes the Survey of residents and clinical teachers) **Link to the Report**	Standards: 1.1.7 (evidence-based medicine and research methodology component of the residency programme); 1.4.1, 1.4.2 (stakeholders participation) 4.1.8 (policy for admission and selection of residents based on the feedback); 5.1.3 (clinical supervisor support); 5.2.2 (Improving the Mentor development programme); 7.2.1 (involvement of the employers in programme evaluation and assessment of the quality of residents training, feedback from the employers); 5.2.3 (Clinical teacher appraisal and development programme) 8.4.2 (improvement of the QMS and QA)	To assess the "areas for improvement" from the final provisions of this analytical report during the period of post-accreditation monitoring of educational programmes of residency specialties, along with the assessment of the implementation of the recommendations of External Expert Commissions.

ECAQA in collaboration with the Union of Kazakhstan Nursing Colleges contribute to the tasks of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan and World Bank that includes two components for reform of nursing education: methodological assistance to nursing colleges, higher nursing colleges and universities (school of nursing) in the development and implementation of institutional capacity building; development of nursing educator competencies and educational programmes for professional development of educators of medical educational institutions and nursing colleges.

These reports include the analyses of the needs of nursing education leadership, nursing educators and practising nurses for quality improvement in nursing education (VET, Applied Bachelor, Academic Nurses, Master's Degree)

In order to monitor and evaluate the implementation of strategic development programmes (as part of the implementation of nursing reforms) of nursing colleges, higher nursing colleges and medical universities, criteria for monitoring the implementation of programmes for the institutional capacity building of medical education organisations have been developed, taking into account international documents on quality assurance and expertise in nursing education.

In the 3rd quarter of 2020, monitoring of the implementation of strategic development programmes for medical colleges, higher medical colleges and medical universities was carried out. Self-evaluation reports with supporting documents were collected from 29 medical higher education institutions, including 6 universities, 22 higher nursing colleges and 1 nursing college.

The experts thoroughly reviewed and assessed the self-evaluation reports of the Development Programmes in six areas of assessment:

1) Planning, relevance and structure of the strategic development programme;
2) Internal unity and consistency of the development programme;
3) Social profile and external coherence of the strategic development programme;
4) Stakeholder participation;
5) Usage of the development programme in the decision-making;
6) Focus on human resources and financial sustainability.

31 criteria were considered in total, including 20 basic criteria and 11 criteria for quality improvement. The results of the expert evaluation were presented at an online meeting with the leaders of higher education institutions on October 29, 2020.

The analysis showed that the assessed higher education institutions had problems associated with:

a) drawing up a strategic development programme taking into account the nursing reforms in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the implementation of a training programme for nursing professionals of a new formation;
b) the need to develop the programmes taking into account the expected results, indicators of achievement that determine the goal of the strategic development programme;

c) monitoring the effectiveness of expenditures (financial, staffing) to measure costs and results, choose the most effective ways of spending funds, timely assess the degree of achievement of planned results and their quality;
d) monitoring strategic initiatives based on rates and indicators.
e) lack of in-depth analysis and monitoring of the implementation of the strategic development programmes. There were no clear mechanisms for the implementation of short-term and long-term goals.

Title of Report	**Actions and Impact**
Methodological assistance to medical colleges, higher medical colleges and universities in the development and implementation of development programmes (Analytical report) **Link to the Report**	The results of the expert evaluation were presented at an online meeting with the leaders of HEIs, Higher Nursing Colleges, Representatives from the MoH RK and authorised professional organisations on October 29, 2020.
Development of nursing educator competencies and educational programmes for professional development of educators of medical educational institutions and nursing colleges. **Link to the Report**	Educational Programmes for Nursing Faculty Training related to the Nursing Educator's Level of Proficiency were approved by the Methodological Council for CPD of Nursing. Minutes No.2. February 2, 2020 137 nursing educators were trained from September to November 2020

ECAQA has published its external quality assurance activities in the time of COVID-19 to share the experience and discuss as a specific topic analysis.

"ECAQA News. Higher and Postgraduate Education in Kazakhstan: Accreditation Process under conditions of the pandemic" article was published in December edition of the CEENQA Newsletter 2020 (p. 11) https://www.ceenqa.org/wp-content/uploads/CEENQA-Newsletter_December_2020_version_12-07.pdf

In the article, ECAQA emphasized that the system of accreditation of higher education institutions and educational programmes had been in lockdown for several months, and after the relaxation of quarantine, it switched to a hybrid format for conducting an external assessment of the quality of education. Thus, ECAQA has developed and, since August 2020, has been applying the Interim recommendations for external evaluation of higher education institutions and educational programmes, which provide for online participation of a foreign expert and offline participation of national academic experts, including representatives of educational institutions, health care system (employers), and students. The main conditions for the peer review are the availability of electronic versions of the main documents of a higher education institution seeking accreditation, high-speed Internet for organising remote interviews with key persons of the organisation and representatives of stakeholders, compliance with safety measures during the pandemic and ensuring safety for members of the expert team.

When developing an algorithm for the work of the External Expert Commission at a higher education institution seeking accreditation, the recommendations and existing practice of the accrediting agencies (ECAQA partners) were taken into consideration. The main criterion for the efficiency of performance of expert work is obtaining evidence (or missing evidence) that the activities of the higher education institution and educational programmes comply with the ECAQA standards for accreditation, developed on the basis of the WFME and ESG international standards for quality assurance.

9.5 ESG Standard 3.5 Resources

Standard: Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

ECAQA has its office in the centre of Almaty. According to the ECAQA's organisational chart it has appropriate number of full-time staff and part-time experts with relevant qualification and training.

Workplaces for staff and experts are equipped (PC, laptops, copy facilities and printers, telephone, software for managing, documentations and database) for agency operations and the employees are supported through staff development programme.

ECAQA allocates annual budget and resources for activities according to its Strategic plan for three years and annual Action Plan that is regularly revised to meet the needs and achieve its mission.

ECAQA has physical facilities which include premises provided on the basis of the Letter of consent dated January 19, 2017 (registered with the notary book under No. 115) of the owner of the building at the address of 75 Karasay Batyr st., Almaty, who gave his consent to provide the premises for the location of the ECAQA office free of charge. Since 2019, premises with an area of 73.3 sq.m. and 53.6 sq.m. have been taken on lease at 92 Maulenov St., Almaty, in order to improve the physical resources (Lease agreement No. 79 dated October 18, 2019). This building has a conference room (subject to an additional agreement with the lessor). ECAQA's premises are equipped with appropriate furniture, while in 2019 furniture was purchased.

Employees' workplaces are provided with office equipment and copying equipment. To conduct meetings and training with the participation of 30 or more people, premises with an area of 80 sq.m. are rented.

The Founder of ECAQA entrusted the management of ECAQA and the renewal of the physical resources on the basis of current needs to S.S. Sarsenbayeva, Director General, by the decision of No. 1 dated January 19, 2017.

Annually, the organisational structure of ECAQA http://www.ecaqa.org/en/about-ecaqa/organisational-structure and the staff schedule, including the name of the structural unit, positions, number of staff units, salary (wage rate) in KZT (Kazakhstan tenge) per month, employment rate or vacancy are approved by order of the Director General at the end of the year.

The functions of the Department for Planning and Administration (accounting, legal support, transport), as well as the Department for IT and Public Relations are outsourced (ECAQA website and social networks maintenance) in accordance with the Contracts: website maintenance: Sole Proprietor Mukhametzhanov A. Series 0101 No. 0047870; transport: Yandex Taxi Contract No. 1422585/20 dated 25.12.2020; accounting: Contract No. 051/131020/002 for connecting the "ITS.PROF" (STANDARD) tariff.

The activities of ECAQA employees are carried out in accordance with the job descriptions approved by the ECAQA Director General dated December 28, 2018, the documents are valid until December 28, 2021 (3 years). The job descriptions include the qualification requirements and characteristics of the position, goals and objectives of the work, job duties, rights and responsibilities of an ECAQA employee. A list of registration of document changes and a list of familiarization of employees with the content of job descriptions corresponding to their position are attached to the job descriptions.

ECAQA's Expert Board consists of the Chairs of Expert Commissions for *Bachelor Degree Programmes, Master's degree* Programmes in Health Professions Education, *PhD* Programmes in Biomedical and Health Sciences, *Residency* (Postgraduate specialty training), *Nursing Education (*Bachelor degree Programme and the HEI and Technical Vocational Education and Training Programme at the Nursing colleges), CPD.

The activities of the Expert Board are carried out in accordance with the Regulations on the ECAQA Expert Board, approved by order of the Director General No. 4 dated February 13, 2017. The Regulations describe the tasks, the procedure for forming the Expert Board, meetings of the Expert Board, accounting and reporting, reorganisation of the Expert Board. Each Expert commission of the Expert Board includes from 4 to 6 experts who are representatives of higher education institutions and colleges in Kazakhstan.

The Expert Board annually develops a work plan and records its meetings. The results of the Expert Board's activities are included in the general annual report on the activities of ECAQA.

The agency has a date-base of experts including 460 (reviewers) who are well trained and experienced in quality assurance in health professions education.

ECAQA was fully sponsored by the founder at the beginning of agency's operation and currently the agency is an independent in finance and other resources/facilities issues for its external quality assurance activities.

Annually, the budget for international activities and conferences, the international and local travel, accommodation, meals of ECAQA's staff and experts are approved by the ECAQA Expert Board, confirmed by Director General of ECAQA and included in the agency's operational plan and attainments' plan in advance.

The annual budget for the international travel and accommodation is considered in accordance with the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated May 11, 2018 No. 256., updated on 11/21/2019 "On approval of the Rules for reimbursement of business travel expenses at the expense of budgetary funds, including to foreign countries".

The expenses for local travel and accommodation for the agency's staff and Members of the Accreditation Council are covered by the ECAQA.

3.5 Supporting documents	
1. Documents on office rental	Link
2. Contracts with legal entities (suppliers) in Russian	Link
3. Registration log of Contracts with legal entities (suppliers) 2019	Link
4. Registration log of Contracts with legal entities (suppliers) 2020	Link
5. Contracts with employees	Link
6. Registration logs of contracts with experts	Link
7. ECAQA Regulations on the Department for Accreditation and Monitoring	Link
8. ECAQA Regulations on the Department for Planning and Administration	Link
9. ECAQA Regulations on the Department for International Collaboration	Link
10. ECAQA Regulations on the Department for IT and Public Relations	Link

9.6 ESG Standard 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Standard: Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities. Agencies need to be accountable to their stakeholders. Therefore, high professional standards and integrity in the agency's work are indispensable. The review and improvement of their activities are on-going so as to ensure that their services to institutions and society are optimal.

Quality Assurance Policy and Processes for Quality Assurance

The aim of ECAQA's quality assurance and quality improvement system is to ensure that its processes and services, both within and outside the organisation, are of a consistently high quality.

Quality Assurance Policy is a part of all agency's processes and the staff and the Expert Board are familiar with their functions and delegations outlined in this policy. This policy is referenced in relevant ECAQA policies, procedures and other supporting documents to ensure that it is familiar to all staff and actively used.

The agency's staff and experts engage in the implementation of a Quality Assurance Programme that was developed by the Expert Board and approved by ECAQA Director General following the Order No. 3 dated February 14, 2017

All staff and the Expert Board are responsible for being aware of, implementing and maintaining the quality assurance system in accordance with their role and responsibilities.

A system approach to improvement of the quality and performance using a cyclical model is used, which includes the following elements: monitoring, assessment, action, evaluation and feedback (feedback is integral to all parts of the cycle). Adequate resources, tools and support are

provided for staff, the Expert Board and key stakeholders to fully engage in its quality assurance and quality improvement system and processes.

The agency routinely collects information on its external quality assurance activities to identify progress, achievements and areas for improvement. This information is collected through a variety of mechanisms including surveys, interviews, literature reviews, audits, observations and policy/record/system reviews.

Analysing information from the monitoring stage provides an assessment of the current situation and identifies the best approach to improvement. Individual assessment activities and recommendations that come from external evaluation activities are shared with relevant staff through staff or team meeting presentations, group discussions or other suitable mechanisms to communicate findings and reach an agreed approach for subsequent improvement activities.

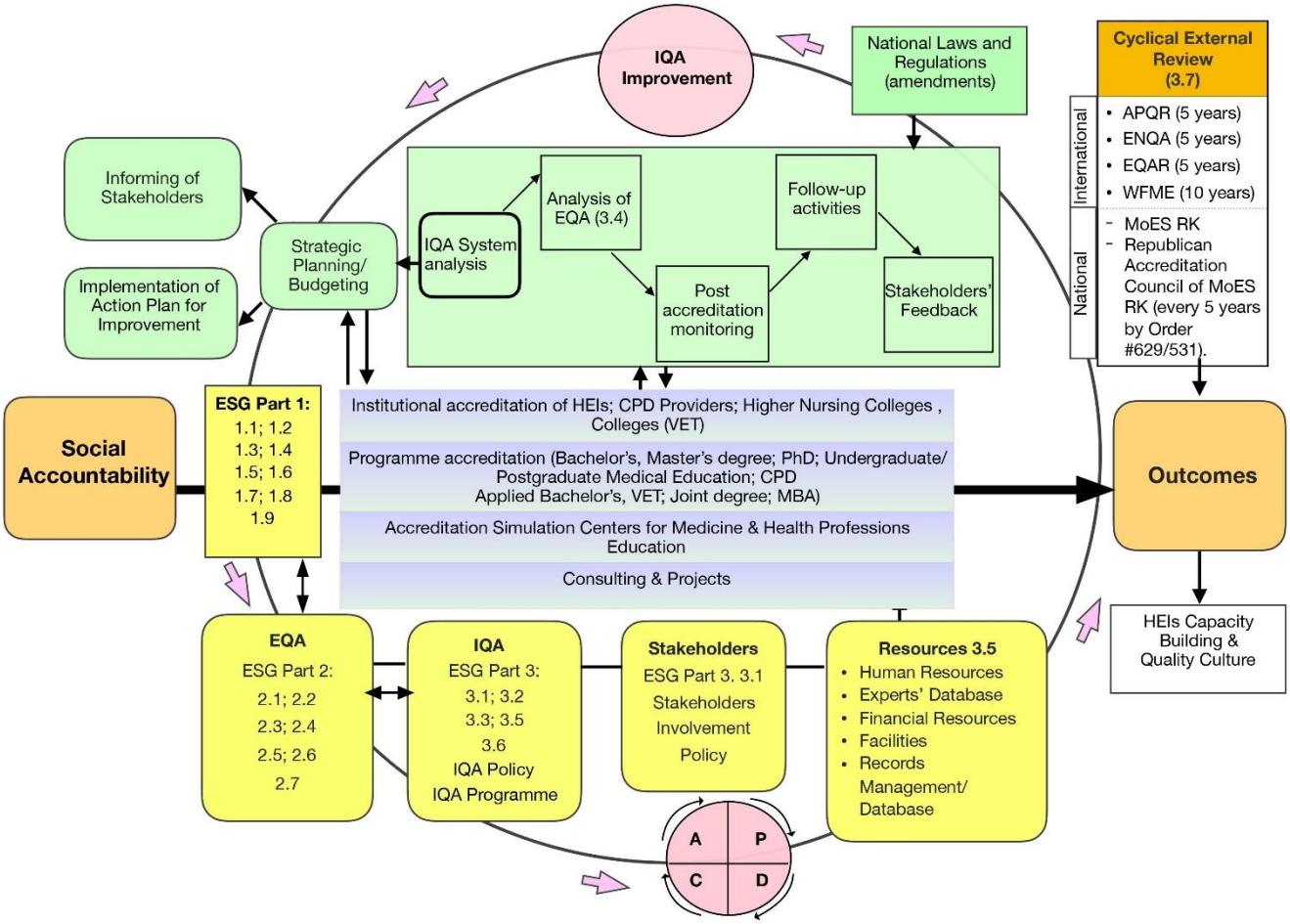
Through the analysis of quality assurance system, quality improvement actions are prioritised. If the activity requires financial resources, an adequate budget is identified before the activity commences. Similarly, if the activity requires significant time/human resources, discussions should take place with management prior to commencing.

Once the action has been taken, individuals involved should evaluate the results of that action to ensure the achievement of the required result.

All individuals involved in, or affected by, quality improvement actions/activities are aware of changes made to the agency and the results of these activities (both internal and external stakeholders). Communication and receiving the feedback at all stages is critical to achieving sustainable results and facilitating organisational change.

The following chart demonstrates the implementation of the Policy and Processes for Quality Assurance. The implementation of the internal quality assurance mechanism is defined in the ECAQA's Quality Assurance Programme. As well, Internal Quality Assurance Framework includes the analysis in compliance with ESG covering Parts 2 and 3. Moreover, it is important to note that the IQA System analysis includes the requirements of the National Laws on Education and Regulations with amendments and the agency's annual report submitted to the MES including its activities, findings and recommendations for improvement of quality in higher education. Finally, it should be evaluated by the agency that the outcomes of IQA processes impact institutional capacity building and development of the quality culture within HEI.

Figure 4. ECAQA Internal Quality Assurance Framework



3.6 Supporting documents 1	
1. Quality Assurance Policy	Link
2. Internal Quality Assurance Framework	Link
3. Quality Assurance Programme	Link
4. Employee Code of Conduct	Link

Processional Conduct. The principle of ethics is fundamental in the activities of ECAQA and is implemented both within the team (Regulations on departments, Job descriptions of employees), and when contacting a higher education institution with a proposal for accreditation. The principle of ethics is observed in the planning and implementation of expert work as part of accreditation.

In accordance with paragraph 1 of Article 9-1. Accreditation of higher education institutions of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 27, 2007 No. 319-III On education (as amended on January 08, 2021) “Accreditation of higher education institutions is carried out on a voluntary basis. The organisation of education is independent in choosing an accrediting agency." In this regard, ECAQA sends letters to higher education institutions (registered with the outgoing document log) with a proposal to conduct institutional and/or specialised accreditation, which enables the organisation to choose an accrediting agency.

ECAQA has developed documents that ensure the ethical conduct of ECAQA employees and experts both in the process of external evaluation of higher education institutions and educational programmes, and at the stage of the Accreditation Council’s decision-making.

ECAQA has developed and enacted a Regulation on Conflict of Interest (Order of the Director General No. 47/1 dated July 12, 2019), which contains the basic principles for managing conflicts of interest, describes the procedure for reporting a conflict of interest and the procedure for resolving

conflict of interest, as well as possible ways to resolve the conflict of interest that has arisen and the responsibilities of ECAQA employees in connection with the disclosure and settlement of conflicts of interest.

The Accreditation Council (AC) of ECAQA, operating in accordance with the Regulation on the AC, is guided by the Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct for a member of the Accreditation Council (approved by order of the Director General No. 4 dated February 13, 2017), which defines the rules of conduct and relationships for each member of the Accreditation Council and the rules for conducting expert work during meetings of the Accreditation Council.

Nomination of national and foreign experts is carried out by sending an official request from ECAQA (registered with the outgoing document log) to the higher education institution, professional association or partner organisation of ECAQA in accordance with the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding/Cooperation (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/ecaqa-partner) to nominate a candidate for inclusion in the ECAQA expert database, including employer-representatives and trainees. In response to a request from higher education institutions (universities, colleges), professional associations send a letter signed by the first head, which presents information about a candidate or candidates to be included on the database of accreditation experts who meet the ECAQA's expert qualification requirements http://www.ecaqa.org/en/ecaqa-s-expert-qualification-requirements.

All expert nomination letters are registered with the ECAQA incoming document log (Fig. 1, 2) and the candidate's data is included on the ECAQA Expert Table for a more detailed study and request for additional documents confirming the level of education and professional qualifications of the future expert. Therefore, the procedure for selecting experts is transparent, free from conflict of interest and objective.

During external evaluation, accreditation experts are guided by the Regulation on the External Expert Commission (EEC) (approved by order of the Director General No. 4 dated February 13, 2017). The Regulation includes the clause 4 "Basic requirements for an External Expert Commission" that describes the obligations of EEC members to sign and comply with the ECAQA Expert's Code of Ethics and sign a statement of commitment on the absence of conflicts of interest and confidentiality. One of the sections of the ECAQA Code of Ethics for an external accreditation expert states the expert's obligation not to disclose confidential information during the accreditation period http://www.ecaqa.org/en/code-of-expert.

Before visiting a higher education institution, each expert of the EEC receives this document by e-mail to acquaint oneself with it, sign and send it to ECAQA and subsequently comply with the provisions of the Code during the visit to the higher education institution.

Clause 6.9 of the same Regulation states that EEC members must sign the above documents before the start of external evaluation and notify ECAQA in advance of the existence of justified reasons that prevent the expert from participating in the EEC work of a particular higher education institution. EEC members follow the standards of ethical conduct of an accreditation expert.

The Guidelines for external evaluation of higher education institution and educational programmes (approved by Order of the Director General No. 5 of February 17, 2017) include the basic principles of external evaluation: (1) consistency and integrity, strict adherence to standards for accreditation; (2) objectivity and report development based on the objective data, facts and a joint decision of all members of the EEC; (3) impartiality, the EEC has no right to assess the higher education institution by comparing it with other similar higher education institutions; (4) openness and transparency, all external evaluation procedures are available to stakeholders; (5) confidentiality of external evaluation data, restriction of access to a number of documents and information obtained during the external evaluation until the completion of the final EEC report; (6) using reliable sources of information and data to determine indicators of quality and effectiveness; (7) adherence to the moral and ethical standards of the expert conduct, strict adherence to the Code of Ethics of an external expert; (8) team work of the EEC members.

The ethical conduct of experts during a site visit to a higher education institution is ensured by an coordinator from ECAQA (paragraph 10 of the Guidelines for external evaluation of a higher education institution and educational programmes). In addition to preparing an external visit and coordinating the work of the EEC, the coordinator from ECAQA monitors the accreditation process

in accordance with the ECAQA Standards for accreditation and also ensures confidentiality principles during a site visit to a higher education institution. The ECAQA coordinator is a mediator between the EEC and the higher education institution seeking accreditation in case of various issues, including the prevention of conflict situations. For example, a representative of the higher education institution can make suggestions through the coordinator.

Compliance with the principles of ethics can be traced in the ECAQA Standards for institutional and specialised (programmatic) accreditation of organisations of higher and postgraduate education (approved by the Expert Board of the Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care No. 4 dated December 02, 2019 and put into effect by the order of the Director General No. 66 of December 06, 2019), which include the clause 3.5 of Standard 3 "Student-Centred Learning and Assessment" that requires the following: “The higher education institution must ensure that the student fulfils obligations regarding teachers, colleagues, and administration in accordance with the Code of Ethics.”

3.6 Supporting documents 2	
1. Regulations on the ECAQA External Expert Commission	Link
2. ECAQA Regulation on Conflict of Interest	Link
3. Code of Conduct for External Review Experts - ECAQA (template)	Link
4. Statement and Obligation of Confidentiality and Absence of Conflict of Interest	Link
5. Employee Code of Conduct	Link
6. Signed Code of Conduct and Statements (from foreign and national experts)	Link

9.7 ESG Standard 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

Standard: Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

In order to assure that ECAQA external quality assurance activities and its practice, procedures and processes are in accordance with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area, at the beginning of 2020, the agency sent an official letter of expression of interest and request for external review by ENQA and registration on EQAR.

ECAQA has been an affiliate of ENQA since 2017 and it is now applying for Membership of ENQA and for the first external review of the agency. ECAQA has not yet been registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and it is applying for the first time for inclusion in the EQAR.

ECAQA has undergone the external evaluation by APQR/APQN's Reviewer Panel and it was registered on the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR) in December 2019. The period of validity: December 2019-2024.

ECAQA, as a quality assurance agency in higher education including medical education and other healthcare profession, aims to meet the ECFMG’s requirements and Announcement that will be effective in 2024. The physicians applying for ECFMG Certification and entering the U.S. graduate medical education will be required to graduate from a medical school that has been appropriately accredited by accrediting agency that uses the criteria comparable to those established for U.S. medical schools by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) or that uses other globally accepted criteria, such as those put forth by the WFME. To satisfy this requirement, the medical school must be accredited by an accrediting agency recognised by WFME that is accepted by the ECGME.

At the current time, the ECAQA Application for WFME Recognition’ Status is in progress and the WFME Recognition Team will conduct the review of the ECAQA in 2021.

3.7 Supporting documents	
1. ECAQA's Certificate of APQR (valid from December 2019 to 2024)	Link
2. ECAQA Outcome letter on Inclusion on APQR 24-Feb-2020	Link

10. Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (Part 2)

10.1 ESG Standard 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

Standard: External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

According to the MES RK Order No.595 of October 30, 2018 Article 36, Article37 and the Law on Education of the Republic Kazakhstan of July 27, 2007 (11-1) paragraph 1, Article 5) in order to improve the quality of education, the university implements an internal quality assurance system based on international standards and guidelines in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) to ensure the quality of higher and postgraduate education. Also, the principle of the learning process is academic integrity and the implementation is ensured by higher education institution.

ECAQA external quality assurance procedures and standards for accreditation ensures that the HEIs align their internal QA system with the requirements of the ESG Part 1. The accreditation process is the same for all types of external quality assurance conducted by ECAQA and the Standards for Accreditation are different and related to the level of education (Bachelor, Master's Degree programmes, PhD, Postgraduate Speciality Training (Residency), Applied Bachelor Degree Programme). The structures of the Standards are available **on the agency's website**.

Given that ECAQA adopted and implemented the Standards for institutional accreditation of the Higher Education Institutions for Health Professions Education based on the World Federation for Medical Education Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic Medical Education, specification of these standards is in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG/Part I) and was defined and discussed by the ECAQA Expert Board. (Annex 1 of the Standards for institutional accreditation of the Higher Education Institutions for Health Professions Education). **Link to Google Drive**

ECAQA Standards for institutional accreditation of the Higher Education Institutions for Health Professions Education specification are in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG/Part I) and the World Federation for Medical Education Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic Medical Education and institutional needs and national Health Care System priorities.

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG/Part I) ***Part 1: Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance***	**World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Basic Medical Education**	**ECAQA's Standards for Institutional Accreditation /National Specifications**
STANDARD: 1.1 Policy for quality assurance	**STANDARD 8. 8. Governance and Administration**	**STANDARD 8. 8. Governance and Administration**
ESG Standard 1.1	**8.4 Administration and Management** Q8.4	**8.4 Administration and Management** 8.4.3; 8.4.4
ESG Standard 1.1 GUIDELINES	**8.1 Governance** Q8.1.1; Q 8.1.2	**8.4 Administration and Management** 8.4.5; 8.4.6; 8.4.7; 8.4.8
	STANDARD 1. 1. Mission and Outcomes	**STANDARD 1. 1. Mission and Outcomes**
	1.1 Mission B 1.1.1; B1.1.2; B 1.1.8	**1.1 Mission** 1.1.5; 1.1.6; 1.1.7; 1.1.8
STANDARD: 1.2 Design and approval of programmes	**STANDARD 2. 2. Educational Programme**	**STANDARD 2. 2. Educational Programmes**
ESG Standard 1.2	**2.7 Programme Management** B 2.7.1	**2.4 Programme Management** 2.4.3
	2.1 Framework of the Programme No requirements for NQF and EQF	**2.1 Framework of the Programme** 2.1.3 (NQF; EQF)

	STANDARD 1. **1. Mission and Outcomes**	**STANDARD 1.** **1. Mission and Outcomes**
ESG Standard 1.2	**1.3 Educational outcomes** B 1.3.1	**1.3 Educational outcomes** 1.3.5
ESG Standard 1.2 GUIDELINES	**2.7 Programme Management** B2.7.1; B2.7.2; Q2.7.1; Q 2.7.2	**2.4 Programme Management** 2.4.1; 2.4.2
	STANDARD 6. **6. Educational Resources**	**STANDARD 6.** **6. Educational Resources**
ESG Standard 1.2 GUIDELINES	**6.5 Educational Expertise** B 6.5.1; B 6.5.2; B6.5.3; Q6.5.1	**6.5 Educational Expertise** 6.5.1; 6.5.2; 6.5.3
	STANDARD 3. **3. Assessment of Students**	**STANDARD 3.** **3. Assessment of Students**
ESG Standard 1.2 GUIDELINES	**3.2 Relation between Assessment and Learning** B 3.2.2; B 3.2.3; B 3.2.4	**3.2 Relation between Assessment and Learning** 3.2.1; 3.2.2
	STANDARD 2. **2. Educational Programme**	**STANDARD 2.** **2. Educational Programmes**
ESG Standard 1.2 GUIDELINES	**2.5 Clinical Sciences and Skills** B 2.5.2; B 2.5.3; B 2.5.4	**2.1 Framework of the Programme** 2.1.3; 2.1.4; 2.1.5
STANDARD: **1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment**	**STANDARD 2.** **2. Educational Programme**	**STANDARD 2.** **2. Educational Programme**
ESG Standard 1.3	**2.1 Framework of the Programme** B 2.1.2	**2.1 Framework of the Programme** 2.1.2
	STANDARD 3. **3. Assessment of Students**	**STANDARD 3.** **3. Assessment of Students**
ESG Standard 1.3	**3.2 Relation between Assessment and Learning** B 3.2.1; B 3.2.3; Q 3.2.1	**3.2 Relation between Assessment and Learning** 3.2.1; 3.2.2
	STANDARD 2. **2. Educational Programme**	**STANDARD 2.** **2. Educational Programme**
ESG Standard 1.3 GUIDELINES	**2.1 Framework of the Programme** B 2.1.2	**2.1 Framework of the Programme** 2.1.2
	STANDARD 7. **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
ESG Standard 1.3 GUIDELINES	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** B 7.1.1; B.7.1.2; B 7.1.4; Q 7.1.1	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** 7.1.1; 7.1.2; 7.1.4
	7.2 Teacher and Student Feedback B 7.2.1	**7.2 Teacher and Student Feedback** 7.2.1
	STANDARD 4. **4. Students**	**STANDARD 4.** **4. Students**
ESG Standard 1.3 GUIDELINES	**4.3 Student Counselling and Support** B 4.3.1; B 4.3.4; Q 4.3.1; Q 4.3.2	**4.3 Student Counselling and Support** 4.3.1; 4.3.3; 4.3.4
	STANDARD 3. **3. Assessment of Students**	**STANDARD 3.** **3. Assessment of Students**
ESG Standard 1.3 GUIDELINES	**3.1 Assessment Methods** B 3.1.1; B 3.1.2; Q3.1.3; B 3.1.4; B 3.1.6; B 3.2.2	**3.1 Assessment Methods** 3.1.1; 3.1.2
	STANDARD 7. **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
ESG Standard 1.3 GUIDELINES	**7.2 Teacher and Student Feedback** B 7.2.1; Q 7.2.1	**7.2 Teacher and Student Feedback** 7.2.1; 7.2.2
STANDARD: **1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**	**STANDARD 4.** **4. Students**	**STANDARD 4.** **4. Students**
ESG Standard 1.4	**4.1 Admission policy and selection** B 4.1.1; B 4.1.2; Q 4.1.1; Q 4.1.2; Q 4.1.3	**4.1 Admission policy and selection** 4.1.1; 4.1.2; 4.1.4; 4.1.5
	STANDARD 7. **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**

ESG Standard 1.4	**7.3 Performance of Students and Graduates** B 7.3.1	**7.3 Performance of Students and Graduates** 7.3.1
	STANDARD 6. **6. Educational Resources**	**STANDARD 6.** **6. Educational Resources**
ESG Standard 1.4 GUIDELINES	**6.6 Educational Exchanges** B 6.6.1; Q 6.6.1; Q 6.6.2	**6.6 Educational Exchanges** 6.6.1; 6.6.2; 6.6.3
	STANDARD 7. **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
	7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation B 7.1.3 B 7.1.4	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** 7.1.2
	STANDARD 4. **4. Students**	**STANDARD 4.** **4. Students**
ESG Standard 1.4 GUIDELINES	**4.3 Student Counselling and Support** No requirement regarding the Documentation explaining the qualification gained	**4.3 Student Counselling and Support** 4.3.5
STANDARD: **1.5 Teaching staff**	**STANDARD 5.** **5. Academic Staff/Faculty**	**STANDARD 5.** **5. Academic Staff/Faculty**
ESG Standard 1.5 and Guidelines	**5.1 Recruitment and Selection Policy** B 5.1.1; B 5.1.2; B 5.1.3; Q 5.1.21; Q 5.1.2	**5.1 Recruitment and Selection Policy** 5.1.1; 5.1.2
ESG Standard 1.5 and Guidelines	**5.2 Staff activity and staff development** B 5.2.1; B 5.2.5; Q 5.2.2	**5.2 Staff activity and staff development** 5.2.1; 5.2.3
STANDARD: **1.6 Learning resources and student support**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**
ESG Standard 1.6 and Guidelines	**8.3 Educational budget and resource allocation** B 8.3.1; B 8.3.2; Q 8.3.1; Q 8.3.2	**8.3 Educational budget and resource allocation** 8.3.1; 8.3.2; 8.3.3; 8.3.4
ESG Standard 1.6 and Guidelines	**STANDARD 6.** **6. Educational Resources**	**STANDARD 6.** **6. Educational Resources**
	6.1 Physical Facilities B 6.1.1; Q 6.1.1	**6.1 Physical Facilities** 6.1.1; 6.1.3
	6.2 Clinical training resources B 6.2.2; Q 6.2.1	**6.2 Clinical training resources** 6.2.1; 6.2.2
	6.3 Information Technology B 6.3.1; Q 6.3.2**;** Q 6.3.4	**6.3 Information Technology** 6.3.1; 6.3.3
STANDARD: **1.7 Information management**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
ESG Standard 1.7 and Guidelines	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** B 7.1.1; B 7.1.2; B 7.1.3	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** 7.1.1; 7.1.2; 7.1.4; 7.1.5
STANDARD: **1.8 Public information**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**
ESG Standard 1.8 and Guidelines	**8.5 Interaction with Health Sector** B 8.5.1; Q 8.5.1	**8.5 Interaction with Health Sector** 8.5.1; 8.5.2; 8.5.3
	STANDARD 2. **2. Educational Programme**	**STANDARD 2.** **2. Educational Programme**
ESG Standard 1.8 and Guidelines	**2.5 Linkage with medical practice and the health sector** Q 2.8.1; Q 2.8..2	**2.5 Linkage with medical practice and the health sector** 2.5.2
STANDARD: **1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
ESG Standard 1.9 and Guidelines	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** B 7.1.1; B 7.1.2; B 7.1.3	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** 7.1.1; 7.1.2; 7.1.4
STANDARD:	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**

1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance		
ESG Standard 1.10 and Guidelines	**7.4 Involvement of Stakeholders** B 7.4.1; Q 7.4.1; Q 7.4.2; Q 7.4.3	**7.4 Involvement of Stakeholders** 7.4.1; 7.4.2

Also, ECAQA Standards for Accreditation of the Postgraduate Medical and Health Professions Education's Specification is compatible with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG/Part I) and the World Federation for Medical Education Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Postgraduate Medical Education and include the institutional needs and national Health Care System priorities.

ESG/Part I) ***Part 1: Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance***	**WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Medical Education**	**ECAQA's Standards for Institutional Accreditation in PGME/National Specifications (compliance with WFME&ESG)**
STANDARD: 1.1 Policy for quality assurance	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**
ESG Standard 1.1	**8.1 Governance B 8.1.6** Q8.1.1; Q 8.1.2	**8.4 Administration and Management** 8.4.4; 8.4.5
	8.4 Administration and Management Q8.4.1; Q8.4.2	
ESG Standard 1.1 GUIDELINES	**8.4 Administration and Management** Q8.4.2 **8.2 Academic Leadership** B 8.2.1; Q 8.2.1; Q 8.2.2	**8.4 Administration and Management** 8.4.6; 8.4.7
STANDARD: 1.2 Design and approval of programmes	**STANDARD 2.** **2. Educational Programme**	**STANDARD 2.** **2. Educational Programmes**
ESG Standard 1.2	**2.1 Framework of the PME Programme** B 2.1.1 *No requirements for NQF and EQF*	**2.1 Framework of the PME Programme** 2.1.3 *(NQF; EQF);* 2.1.8
	2.3 Programme Content B 2.3.1- B2.3.11 Q 2.3.1	
	2.5 Organisation of Education	**2.3 Organisation of Education** 2.3.5
ESG Standard 1.2 GUIDELINES	**STANDARD 1.** **1. Mission and Outcomes**	**STANDARD 1.** **1. Mission and Outcomes**
	1.3 Educational outcomes B 1.3.1	**1.3 Educational outcomes** 1.3.5
ESG Standard 1.2 GUIDELINES	**2.1 Framework of the PME Programme** B 2.1.1	**2.1 Framework of the PME Programme** B 2.1.1
	2.5 Organisation of Education B 2.5.2; B 2.5.3	**2.3 Organisation of Education** 2.3.2; 2.3.3
	STANDARD 6. **6. Educational Resources**	**STANDARD 6.** **6. Educational Resources**
ESG Standard 1.2 GUIDELINES	**6.6 Educational Expertise** B 6.6.1; B 6.6.2; B6.6.3; Q6.6.1	**6.6 Educational Expertise** 6.6.1; 6.6.2
	STANDARD 3. **3. Assessment of Trainees**	**STANDARD 3.** **3. Assessment of Students**
ESG Standard 1.2 GUIDELINES	**3.2 Relation between Assessment and Learning** B 3.2.2; 3.2.3; B 3.2.4; B 3.2.5	**3.2 Relation between Assessment and Learning** 3.2.1; 3.2.2
STANDARD: 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	**STANDARD 2.** **2. Educational Programme**	**STANDARD 2.** **2. Educational Programme**
ESG Standard 1.3	**2.1 Framework of the Programme** B 2.1.4; B 2.1.7; B 2.1.9	**2.1 Framework of the Programme** 2.1.4; 2.1.6; 2.1.9
ESG Standard 1.3	**STANDARD 3.** **3. Assessment of Students**	**STANDARD 3.** **3. Assessment of Students**

	3.1 Assessment Methods B 3.1.1; B 3.1.3	**3.1 Assessment Methods** B 3.1.1; B 3.1.3
	3.2 Relation between Assessment and Learning B 3.2.1; B 3.2.3	**3.2 Relation between Assessment and Learning** 3.2.1; 3.2.2
	STANDARD 2. **2. Educational Programme**	**STANDARD 2.** **2. Educational Programme**
ESG Standard 1.3 GUIDELINES	**2.1 Framework of the Programme** B 2.1.5; B 2.1.7; Q 2.1.1	**2.1 Framework of the Programme** 2.1.4; 2.1.6; 2.1.9
	2.5 Organisation of Education B. 2.5.3; Q 2.5.2	**2.3 Organisation of Education** 2.3.3; 2.3.4
	STANDARD 4. **4. Trainees**	**STANDARD 4.** **4. Trainees**
	4.3 Trainee counselling and support B 4.3.1; Q.4.3.1	**4.3 Trainee counselling and support** 4.3.1; 4.3.7
	STANDARD 7. **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
ESG Standard 1.3 GUIDELINES	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** B 7.1.5; B.7.1.9	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** 7.1.4
	7.2 Trainer and trainees Feedback B 7.2.1; B. 7.2.2	**7.2 Teacher and Student Feedback** 7.2.1
	STANDARD 3. **3. Assessment of Trainees**	**STANDARD 3.** **3. Assessment of Trainees**
ESG Standard 1.3 GUIDELINES	**3.1 Assessment Methods** B 3.1.1 – B 3.1.7 Q 3.1.1 – Q 3.1.3	**3.1 Assessment Methods** 3.1.1-3.1.9
	STANDARD 5. **5. Trainers**	**STANDARD 5.** **5. Trainers**
ESG Standard 1.3 GUIDELINES	**5.2 Trainers Obligations and Trainer Development** B 5.2. Q 5.2.3	**5.2 Trainers Obligations and Trainer Development** 5.2.2; 5.2.3
STANDARD: **1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**	**STANDARD 4.** **4. Trainees**	**STANDARD 4.** **4. Trainees**
ESG Standard 1.4	**4.1 Admission policy and selection** B 4.1.3; B 4.1.4; B 4.1.7 Q 4.1.3; Q 4.1.4	**4.1 Admission policy and selection** 4.1.3; 4.1.4; 4.1.8; 4.1.9; 4.3.9
ESG Standard 1.4 **ESG Standard 1.4 GUIDELINES**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
	7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation B 7.1.7	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** 7.1.4; 7.1.7
	7.3 Performance Qualified Doctors B 7.3.1; B 7.3.2; B 7.3.3; Q 7.3.1; Q 7.3.2	**7.3 Performance of Qualified** 7.3.1; 7.3.2; 7.3.3; 7.3.4; 7.3.5
ESG Standard 1.4 GUIDELINES	**STANDARD 6.** **6. Educational Resources**	**STANDARD 6.** **6. Educational Resources**
	6.7 Learning and Alternative Setting B 6.7.1; B 6.7.2; Q 6.7.1; Q 6.7.2	**6.7 Learning and Alternative Setting** 6.7.1; 6.7.2; 6.7.3; 6.7.4
ESG Standard 1.4 GUIDELINES	**STANDARD 4.** **4. Students**	**STANDARD 4.** **4. Students**
	4.3 Student Counselling and Support -	**4.3 Student Counselling and Support** 4.3.9
	STANDARD 8. **8. Governance and Administration**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**
	8.1 Governance B 8.1.5	**8.1 Governance** 8.1.2
STANDARD: **1.5 Teaching staff**	**STANDARD 5.** **5. Trainers**	**STANDARD 5.** **5. Trainers**
ESG Standard 1.5 and Guidelines	**5.1 Recruitment and Selection Policy** B 5.1.1 – B.5.1.5 Q 5.1.1 - Q 5.1.6	**5.1 Recruitment and Selection Policy** 5.1.1- 5.1.3

ESG Standard 1.5 and Guidelines	**5.2 5.2 Trainers Obligations and Trainer Development** B 5.2.1- B 5.2.3 Q 5.2.1-5.2.3	**5.2 Trainers Obligations and Trainer Development** 5.2.1 - 5.2.4
STANDARD: **1.6 Learning resources and student support**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**
ESG Standard 1.6 and Guidelines	**8.3 Educational budget and resource allocation** B 8.3.1; B 8.3.2; Q 8.3.1; Q 8.3.2	**8.3 Educational budget and resource allocation** 8.3.1; 8.3.2; 8.3.3
ESG Standard 1.6 and Guidelines	**STANDARD 6.** **6. Educational Resources**	**STANDARD 6.** **6. Educational Resources**
	6.1 Physical Facilities B 6.1.1-B 6.1.5; Q 6.1.1	**6.1 Physical Facilities** 6.1.1; 6.1.2
	6.2 Learning Settings B 6.2.1; B 6.2.2; Q 6.2.1; Q.6.2.2	**6.2 Learning Settings** 6.2.1; 6.2.2
	6.3 Information Technology B 6.3.2; Q 6.3.1	**6.3 Information Technology** 6.3.2; 6.3.3
ESG Standard 1.6 Guidelines	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**
	8.2 Academic Leadership B. 8.2.1; Q 8.2.1; Q 8.2.2.	**8.2 Academic Leadership** 8.2.1; 8.2.2
	8.4 Administration and Management B 8.4.1	**8.4 Administration and Management** 8.4.1
STANDARD: **1.7 Information management**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
ESG Standard 1.7 and Guidelines	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** B 7.1.1- B 7.1.8; B.7.1.10; B 7.1.11	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** 7.1.1-7.1.5; 7.1.7
STANDARD: **1.8 Public information**	**STANDARD 1.** **1. Mission and Outcomes**	**STANDARD 1.** **1. Mission and Outcomes**
ESG Standard 1.8 and Guidelines	**1.1 Mission** B 1.1.2	**1.1.Mission** 1.1.1
	1.3 Educational outcomes B 1.3.10	**1.3 Educational outcomes** 1.3.3
	STANDARD 7. **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
	7.4 Involvement of Stakeholders B 7.4.1; Q 7.4.1	**7.4 Involvement of Stakeholders** 7.4.1; 7.4.2
	STANDARD 8. **8. Governance and Administration**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**
	-	8.4.8; 8.4.9
STANDARD: **1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
ESG Standard 1.9 and Guidelines	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** B 7.1.1- B 7.1.8 B.7.1.10; B 7.1.11	**7.1 Mechanisms for programme monitoring and evaluation** 7.1.1-7.1.5; 7.1.7
STANDARD: **1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**	**STANDARD 7.** **7. Programme Evaluation**
ESG Standard 1.10 and Guidelines	**7.4 Involvement of Stakeholders** B 7.4.1; Q 7.4.1; Q 7.4.2; Q 7.4.3	**7.4 Involvement of Stakeholders** 7.4.1; 7.4.2
	STANDARD 8. **8. Governance and Administration**	**STANDARD 8.** **8. Governance and Administration**
	8.2 Academic Leadership Q 8.2.1.; Q 8.2.2.	**8.2 Academic Leadership** 8.2.2

The Standards for Accreditation Clinical Skills Centre are specific standards related to simulation-based learning and patient safety and for this reason these Standards are not aligned with ESG/Part I (see p. 25) Link to the Standards

2.1 Supporting documents	
1. Standards for Institutional Accreditation (based on the WFME Global Standards and ESG 2015 Specification)	Link

10.2 ESG Standard 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

Standard: External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

In order to ensure effectiveness and objectivity it is vital for external quality assurance to have clear aims agreed by stakeholders.

The ECAQA's external quality assurance activities are defined by itself and relied on its own methodology that comprises the following: mission and strategic goals and outcomes; value and quality assurance principles; accountability to stakeholders (Government, Society, HEIs, Students, Employers); setting up and updating the Standards and Guidelines for Internal and External Quality Assurance based on feedback from stakeholders (HEIs, Students, Employers, Professional Associations, International and National Experts); external evaluation of the Higher Education Institutions and Medical and other Healthcare Professions Education Programmes (Bachelor, Master, PhD, Residency (postgraduate speciality training) CPD, Applied Bachelor Degree's Programme, Vocational Training Programme); Involvement of students to accreditation process (Independent Student Analysis, Site-visit Team Member, Feedback on Standards and Process) as well as Employers and Professional Associations; external evaluation of the quality of education and provision of feedback; independence of decision making by the agency's Accreditation Council, which meets the fundamental principles of WHO/WFME Guidelines and ESG; complaints and appeals procedure; transparency and publication of external evaluation reports including the data and findings; selection criteria for experts and their nomination, avoiding conflict of interest; staff /exerts training and assessment of their competencies; appropriate arrangements for external evaluation process; adequate resources allocation; international collaboration and partnership contribution to external and internal quality assurance; focus on continuous improvement.

HEI working groups conduct self-evaluation procedure. A report on the results of the self-evaluation (Self-Evaluation Report) is submitted to the accrediting agency. The accrediting agency organises a site visit to the HEI. If the data provided in the Self-Evaluation Report is accurate and the university's overall activities comply with the standards and criteria, a report with recommendations for the university to improve the quality of education is prepared. A post-accreditation monitoring is held in order to ensure the compliance of the HEI activities with the criteria and standards. An annual report of the agency is submitted to the MES RK.

Accredited higher education institutions and educational programmes are monitored by the agency throughout the duration of the accreditation term (5 years) that includes: development of the action plan for quality improvement according to the Reviewers Team's Recommendations; submitting follow up reports with supporting documents; informing the agency of any substantive changes in the scope of activities of the higher education institution, including any educational programmes changes and complete database for post-accreditation monitoring system.

As a member of international and regional associations and networking in quality assurance in higher education, the agency reviews its methodology and standards for accreditation to integrate and adopt the international quality principles and standards (INQAAHE, ENQA, APQR, WHO/WFME).

Given the importance of the standards in the overall effectiveness of an accreditation process, the agency is maximizing the clarity and measurability of the agency's standards that are extremely important and justifiable.

The standards refer to the legal and regulatory system in which the higher education institutions must operate. References to the legislation or regulatory agencies are clearly documented in the Normative references for each section of standards and within specific standards.

This adaptation of the WFME standards as well as ESG reflect the legal and regulatory requirements and that the standards are comprehensive and complete.

ECAQA Expert Board has approved the regulation regarding the cost estimation for its main external quality assurance activities.

ECAQA's External Quality Assurance during the COVID-19

For the purpose of decreasing the risks of virus spread, the agency has revised its quality assurance procedure for assuring the safety while conducting accreditation process and re-thinking its quality assurance methodology. All external quality assurance activities are conducted predominantly online, with exceptions of cases as Self-evaluation of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) and site-visit of experts. Therefore, in case of site-visiting, this activity was changed to hybrid mode sequencing offline and online meetings of Expert Board and HEI representatives.

Interim Guidelines for external evaluation of Higher education institutions and educational programmes were developed to conduct accreditation during the pandemic situation and approved by the ECAQA Expert Board. Moreover, in accordance with the Interim Guidelines, two HEIs participated in the online external evaluation in July. Also, on-line five-day site-visit was conducted in compliance with the external evaluation procedure. Subsequent external evaluations of HEIs/educational programmes were conducted in a hybrid format with the participation of international experts in a remote mode.

These Guidelines are used as an internal regulation that is based on key discussions of international organisations in quality assurance in higher education (ENQA, INQAAHE, CHEA/CIQG, APQN) regarding the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on higher professional education, activity of education institutions and accrediting agencies around the world and the recommendations for carrying out their activities under the conditions of emergency and quarantine.

Under the conditions of emergency, a higher education and science institution may limit access to a number of facilities, equipment and rooms, including those related to the educational process. In this regard, the external evaluation procedure should have several options: extended preliminary preparation of the examination of a report on self-evaluation; a remote format of studying the documents of a higher education institution and verifying the data of a report on self-evaluation; preliminary online meeting of the EEC members; remote participation of a foreign expert in the external evaluation (preparation of reviews, recommendations, a list of questions for a higher education institution; remote interviews with stakeholders and participation in online meetings); special schedule of the on-site visit of an External Expert Commission to a higher education institution with a reduction of the duration of the visit; online meeting of the Accreditation Council of the agency. The final stage of accreditation procedure is the ECAQA Accreditation Council's decision on accreditation of a higher education institution and/or educational programme.

2.2 Supporting documents	
1. ECAQA Policy and Procedures for Conducting Accreditation	Link
2. Interim Guidelines for External Evaluation of HEIs and EPs	Link
3. Regulations on the cost of Accreditation Procedure	Link

10.3 ESG Standard 2.3 Implementing processes

Standard: External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include: - a self-assessment or equivalent; - an external assessment normally including a site visit; - a report resulting from the external assessment; - a consistent follow-up.

External evaluation is carried out using internationally recognized WHO/WFME Guidelines (2005) and ESG (2015) as well as following the ECAQA's Policy and Procedures and Regulations related to each stage of the accreditation process (application; eligibility requirements validation; self-evaluation (institutional or programmatic); EEC's on-site visit and external evaluation; submission of the final report of EEC; decision on accreditation and consistent follow up procedures and actions; post-accreditation monitoring.

All processes of external evaluation of higher education institutions and educational programmes (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/accreditation-process-and-procedures) are consistent and transparent and include the following stages:

1) In order to ensure the effectiveness of a self-evaluation procedure of a higher education institution or educational programme, ECAQA conducts training for the higher education institution's internal team on self-evaluation, http://www.ecaqa.org/en/workshops-for-qa-units-at-heis, then "Standards for accreditation: internal quality assurance in education" certificate is issued, the Guide for Self-Evaluation and Standards for Accreditation are provided. ECAQA helps higher education institutions plan the self-evaluation activities.
2) Self-evaluation of higher education institutions/educational programmes for compliance with standards for accreditation (Guide for self-evaluation provided by ECAQA http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/accreditation-process-and-procedures) is conducted, and the higher education institution team prepares the self-evaluation report that shall be sent to ECAQA with the enclosed cover letter signed by the chief executive officer of the higher education institution two months before the date of the site visit.
3) ECAQA conducts primary expert evaluation of the report (execution of the document, structure compliance, completeness of information) and develops corrective action recommendations, which the higher education institution shall address within 2 weeks and submit the corrected report to ECAQA.
4) Accreditation experts prepare review of the self-evaluation report (content, quality of information) and deliver it to the higher education institution for making corrections and additions to the self-evaluation report.
5) The External Expert Commission (EEC) is organised in accordance with the Regulation on EEC http://www.ecaqa.org/en/the-external-expert-commission, section 5).
6) External evaluation is conducted transparently during the site visit to the higher education institution in order to validate and verify the data of the self-evaluation report and search for evidence of compliance with standards for accreditation (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/external-evaluation) (for example, schedule of the site visit http://www.ecaqa.org/en/the-external-expert-commision, meetings with representatives of the higher education institution, visits to educational facilities and all expert actions are monitored and recorded by the coordinator from ECAQA (taking photos, drawing up lists of documents studied, requiring copies for the subsequent examination of documents is carried out upon agreement with the higher education institution's administration). Information on the EEC visit is posted on the ECAQA website at http://www.ecaqa.org/en/news. This ensures transparency of the procedure and stakeholders' access to the information. During the pandemic, the external evaluation was carried out in accordance with the "Interim guidelines for external evaluation of higher education institutions and educational programmes".
7) Experts fill out the Quality Profile and Criteria Evaluation Form (for instance, http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/ENG/ECAQA%20QUALITY%20PROFILE%20AND%20CRITERIA%20EVALUATION%20FORM%20(Master%20degree).pdf), write the final report of the EEC according to the ECAQA Guidelines for External Evaluation (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/register-of-accredited-hei-pge-cpd-olleges/institutional-accreditation1/hei-s, http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/register-of-accredited-hei-pge-cpd-olleges/specialised-accreditation/residency-programmes and develop recommendations for improving the results of peer review and recommendations for the Accreditation Council (filled out Quality Profiles are kept at ECAQA).
8) The ECAQA Accreditation Council (AC) makes collective decision on the basis of external evaluation (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/about-ecaqa/accreditation-council). Transparency (open voting, generation of minutes of the meetings) and ethics (AC member's Code of Ethics http://www.ecaqa.org/en/about-ecaqa/accreditation-council). AC meetings are recorded (documents are kept at ECAQA) in accordance with the Regulation on the ECAQA AC and the results of the AC decisions are posted on the ECAQA website http://www.ecaqa.org/en/events/past-events. This ensures transparency of the procedure and access to the results of stakeholders. During the pandemic, all AC meetings were recorded by means of the Zoom platform and the videos are kept at ECAQA (on the copy protected disk).

9) The data on the decision of the Accreditation Council are posted on the ECAQA website (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/register-of-accredited-hei-pge-cpd-olleges, http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/register-of-accredited-hei-pge-cpd-olleges/specialised-accreditation) and on the website of The Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Centre (https://enic-kazakhstan.kz/en/accreditation/documents), which ensures the transparency of the process and availability of information about the status of accreditation for all stakeholders.
10) Post-accreditation monitoring is carried out during the period of validity of the accreditation certificate http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/post-accreditation-monitoring.

The reliability of the external quality assurance process is guaranteed by the following:

1. Approved ECAQA Standards for Accreditation (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/standards, http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/institutional-accreditation), which are annually analysed and updated on the basis of the results of questioning of higher education institutions.
2. Planning of the external evaluation process (schedule of the site visit, application of various forms of expertise including observation, interview, study of documentation, review of facilities and resources, questioning of stakeholders), which ensures the implementation of the goals and objectives of the EEC in compliance with time management and preparation of the higher education institution seeking accreditation for the EEC site visit.
3. Observance of ethics and absence of conflict of interests of the EEC members (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/code-of-expert), which is monitored by the coordinator from ECAQA.

The effectiveness and quality of an external evaluation depends on the following factors:

1. Selection of candidates for experts (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/ecaqa-s-expert-qualification-requirements) and the procedure for nominating experts for accreditation with the help of ECAQA partners, higher education institutions, professional associations: 1) requirements for the level and professional training/experience in accreditation; 2) analysis of the situation and compliance; 3) requesting a candidacy; 4) selection of the candidacy; 5) request reply; 6) contacting the expert and providing the expert with relevant information and materials; 7) expert instruction; 8) including the expert in the External Expert Commission. This allowed ECAQA to build a solid database of experts, including foreign ones.
2. The level of training of accreditation experts (ECAQA conducts training for potential experts http://www.ecaqa.org/en/training/workshops-for-ecaqa-s-experts before the site visit to a higher education institution; experts are instructed, including expert-students http://www.ecaqa.org/en/about-accreditation-for-students, http://www.ecaqa.org/en/students/students-involvement; experts are provided with the necessary guidance papers (standards, guidelines, quality profile and criteria evaluation forms).
3. EEC is accompanied by the coordinator from ECAQA (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/the-external-expert-commision, Guidelines for external evaluation of a higher education institution and educational programmes, “The functions of the ECAQA observer (coordinator) include…" part on p.15).

The utility of the quality of external evaluation lies in the following:

1. Monitoring. Determining compliance with standards for accreditation, comparing actual achieved results with established standards and identifying areas for changes and development.
2. Improvement of higher education institutions/educational programmes (development of recommendations for improvement). An example of efficiency is the fact that the organisations for continuing professional development (CPD), which were accredited by ECAQA (26 organisations in total for 2019-2020), have conducted a detailed revision of the key processes of the organisations' activities, updated the documentation, introduced information system development in the processes of getting feedback, managed to

participate in a tender at the public procurement portal (placement of the state and local budgets of medical organisations to improve the qualifications of healthcare professionals).
3. Guaranteeing quality education for stakeholders (applicants, students, parents/guardians of students, society, health care system).

2.3 Supporting documents	
1. Applications for Accreditation and Application Form	Link
2. Standards for Institutional Accreditation	Link
3. Standards for Specialised/Professional Accreditation	Link
4. Guides to Institutional Self-Evaluation	Link
5. Guides to Educational Programme Self-Evaluation	Link
6. ECAQA GUIDE Role of Students in Accreditation	Link
7. Instruction for Students for Independent Student Analysis	Link
8. Guidelines for External Evaluation of a HEI and EP	Link
9. Code of Conduct for External Review Experts	Link
10. Guidelines for Report Preparation of the EEC	Link
11. Regulations on the ECAQA Post-Accreditation Monitoring	Link
12. Regulations on the ECAQA Complaints Commission	Link
13. Regulations on the ECAQA Appeals Commission	Link

10.4 ESG Standard 2.4 Peer-review experts

Standard: External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

The credibility of the accreditation process depends on the quality and composition of the External Expert Commission (EEC). The EEC must collectively possess the content and contextual expertise to review all of the standards and have expertise in the accreditation process.

ECAQA's experts are involved in external quality assurance as members of EEC.

The main selection criteria for the experts (reviewers) are set up and published by the ECAQA and include the following: the reviewers should have relevant professional qualification, particularly, for medical education programme evaluation they should have educational/research background in medicine and other relevant health professions; be a senior academic staff in biomedical sciences or in clinical disciplines, relevant health sciences, senior administrative staff from higher education institution in the country; have at least 3 years of experience in evaluating the quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes in higher education; have prior knowledge or experience about the higher education system including health professions education and culture in the country or region where the accrediting agency operates; be trained and assessed as reviewer for external quality assurance of higher education institutions and educational programmes; have an advanced level of different set of skills and competencies required for external evaluation of quality assurance of higher education institutions and their programmes; have a good communication/teamwork and presentation skills as well as the experience in conducting discussions, selecting and finalising consensual decisions, writing external evaluation reports and recommendations for improvement.

ECAQA's External Expert Commission (EEC) consists of 5-6 Members and includes the Chair, National Academic Expert, International Expert, Employer and Student. Two International Experts should be involved as members of a site-visit teams at the National Universities.

ECAQA's Experts Qualification requirements and core competencies are well described and are available on the website: http://www.ecaqa.org/en/ecaqa-s-expert-qualification-requirements

The experts carry out the external evaluation of HEIs and Educational programmes following the Regulations on External Expert Commission.

The agency's external evaluation procedures include the mechanisms for the prevention of conflicts of interest, and the experts have to complete the form of Statement and Obligation of Confidentiality and Absence of Conflict of Interest as well as the Expert's Code of Ethics and ensure that any judgements resulting from external evaluation are based on explicit and published criteria.

Nomination of national and international experts is carried out by sending an official request from ECAQA (registered in the journal of outgoing documents) to the higher education institutions, professional associations or partner organisations of ECAQA in accordance with the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding (http://www.ecaqa.org/en/ecaqa-partner) with a request to nominate the experts for inclusion in the ECAQA accreditation expert database, including employer representatives and students. In response to the request, the higher education institutions (universities, colleges), professional associations send a letter including the expert's details to be included into a database of accreditation experts who meet the requirements of ECAQA. All expert nomination letters are registered in the ECAQA Incoming Document Log and the experts' data are included in the ECAQA Experts' Database for a more detailed consideration and request for additional documents confirming their professional qualifications. Therefore, the procedure for selecting and nominating the experts is transparent, free from conflicts of interest and reliable.

In order to create the database of experts, ECAQA signed Memorandum of Cooperation with 13 national professional associations and organisations and 15 international organisations and accrediting agencies. The ECAQA's Experts' Database includes graduates of the Bolashak International Scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Currently, the Database of Experts includes 460 nominated experts.

Expert students are included in the EEC in order to comprehensively cover the main areas of activity of a higher education institution (clause 5.3 of the Regulations on the External Expert Commission), or key aspects of the educational programme in accordance with the ECAQA Standards and Criteria. Expert students act as a direct consumers of educational services, express the interests of students and follow the requirements of clause 11.5 of the ECAQA Guidelines for External Evaluation of a Higher Education Institution and Educational Programmes, 2017.

In this regard, ECAQA organises a database of students, who are nominated for the EEC, and repeatedly conducts training for the students on the evaluation of educational programmes.

All necessary information is provided for students – potential experts – in the "Students" section on the ECAQA's website http://www.ecaqa.org/en/students/about-accreditation, http://www.ecaqa.org/en/students/students-involvement

The expert student nomination procedure includes the following steps:

1) an official letter is sent to a higher education institution or student association (for instance, ECAQA has concluded a Memorandum of Cooperation with KazMSA) with a request to nominate a student in accordance with the level of education (undergraduate student, intern, resident, master student, PhD student) and specialty of the educational programme → the letter describes the requirements for the nominated student – the student should:
   - be well-performing,
   - have an appropriate level of training and education,
   - be an active participant in student unions,
   - be engaged in research,
   - have achievements in various areas of academic and other activities,
   - have no conflict of interest with the higher education institution seeking accreditation that is the reason for organisation of the EEC that requires the student nomination.
2) the higher education institution or student association provides the response that includes the decision of the management and the student's data (name, course, specialty, contact details);

3) ECAQA coordinator sends a message to the nominated student, providing detailed description of the planned site visit to the higher education institution seeking accreditation (dates, schedule);

4) Before starting the work of the EEC, the expert student signs the Code of Conduct for External Review Experts and the Statement and Obligation of Confidentiality and Absence of Conflict of Interest.

ECAQA coordinator provides expert student with on-line versions of:

- Standards for Accreditation and Guides to Self-Evaluation;
- Recommendations for Involvement of Students in Accreditation Process;
- Quality Profile and Evaluation Criteria Form (in accordance with the type of accreditation and the level and specialty of the educational programme seeking accreditation);
- Self-evaluation report of the higher education institution/educational programme.

5) Before visiting a higher education institution, the expert student should study and complete desk review of the Self-Evaluation Report of the higher education institution (educational programme).

6) During the site visit to the higher education institution, the expert student has their own area of responsibility and is guided by the EEC Chair on the evaluation of the educational programme and ECAQA Guide to Role of Student in the Accreditation of the Higher Education Institutions for Health Professions Education http://www.ecaqa.org/doxs/ENG/ECAQA%20GUIGE%20Role%20of%20Students%20in%20Accreditation.pdf

The programme for capacity building of experts in quality assurance and the appropriately training is defined as the priority.

ECAQA experts (reviewers) actively participated and were trained at the INQAAHE2017/2019, APQN2017,2018,2019, ENQA2018/2019, WFME 2009/2017-2019, AMEE 2017 workshops and in the country by international experts from the WFME, AFMC and CSIH/Canada, ORPHEUS, Germany, JAMK University, Finland.

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/component/k2/item/245-seminar-of-the-senior-adviser-to-wfme-and-afmc-president-genevi-ve-moineau-on-accreditation-of-medical-education-international-and-national-contexts-and-perspectives

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/component/k2/item/243-the-focus-of-the-ecaqa-on-quality-assurance-in-nursing-education

The training on accreditation in medical education is organised for the experts and is compulsory for all new experts prior to their involvement in the external evaluation.

http://www.ecaqa.org/en/training/workshops-for-ecaqa-s-experts

At the Republican Higher Nursing College, within the framework of the Memorandum of Cooperation with the Kazakhstan Union of Nursing Colleges, the agency conducted a workshop on the topic of “Quality assurance in continuing professional development of nursing education”, “Distance learning technologies in Nursing" for 15 nurses-experts who are responsible for the continuing professional development of nurses and involved in the accreditation of Nursing education.

From June 9 to June 25, 2020, an online advanced training of experts in accreditation of education was held on the topic of "Professional training of experts in the accreditation of basic and postgraduate medical education and pharmaceutical education" (54 academic hours) with a certificate of completion of this course. The training was attended by 30 experts. All resources and videos of online sessions are posted on the channel https://studio.youtube.com/channel/UCM0L5j1i7QRlqSRVVTCZJmg/playlists, to which the training participants have access.

2.4 Supporting documents	
1. Regulations on the ECAQA External Expert Commission	Link
2. ECAQA Regulation on Conflict of Interest	Link
3. Code of Conduct for External Review Experts - ECAQA (template)	Link
4. Statement and Obligation of Confidentiality and Absence of Conflict of Interest	Link
5. Signed Code of Conduct and Statements (from foreign and national experts)	Link

10.5 ESG Standard 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

Standard: Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

ECAQA external quality assurance activities are based on both the self-assessment and an external evaluation process. Also, during the on-site visit, EEC members gather information by reviewing documents, relevant reports and statistic data, conducting individual and group interviews with representatives of administrative and academic staff, students, observing teaching and training process. The facilities and resources, which are available to support the educational programme, are also evaluated, and meetings with faculty and students, alumni, employers are conducted to validate the data contained in the self-evaluation report.

ECAQA decisions are based on published evaluation criteria and procedures and can be justified only with reference to the evaluation criteria and procedures.

The agency uses the ECAQA Quality Profile and Evaluation Criteria Forms (approved by the Order No.5 on February 17, 2017) related to the higher education institution and educational programme (Bachelor, Master's Degree, PhD, Residency, CPD, Applied Bachelor) for external evaluation and to serve as the basis for drafting of the external evaluation report. The form is based on the ECAQA Standards for accreditation and includes relevant criteria for evaluation of fulfilment of these Standards. This form of evaluation criteria should be completed by members of EEC during the site-visit and scheduled meetings.

A written report of findings and conclusion are created based on the self-assessment report, information that is gathered by the reviewers' team during the site-visit.

ECAQA's EEC Members develop a list of strengths, areas of partial or substantial non-compliance with the Standards for accreditation, and any areas in transition and prepare preliminary draft of the EEC Report that includes the summary of findings and conclusions based on the review of the self-evaluation report and database, other institutional documents, and interviews with students, faculty, administrative staff, alumni, and employers.

The possible conclusions of the EEC's discussion on higher education institution or educational programme, which is in compliance with the ECAQA's Standards for Institutional/Programmatic accreditation, are the following:

- *Standard is fulfilled* – this means that the higher education institution meets this standard, and the fulfilment has been demonstrated during external evaluation;
- *Standard is partly fulfilled* – this means that the higher education institution meets this standard partly, it has not been fulfilled as required and has not been appropriately demonstrated during external evaluation;
- *Standard is not fulfilled* – this means that the higher education institution does not meet this standard and the seriousness of the problem is to be reflected in the summary of the higher education institution or educational programme external evaluation report.

The Guide for external evaluation of higher education and educational programme provides information for the reviewers regarding goals and objectives of external evaluation, principles of external evaluation, confidentiality of external evaluation, stages of external evaluation, responsibility of the Chair and members of the External Expert Commission, content and structure of the EEC final

report and completion of the report and ensuring that the content and structure is consistent across reviewers team.

ECAQA's decision on accreditation takes into consideration the outcomes of both the institution's self-assessment process and the external evaluation, and any other relevant information should be discussed.

The ECAQA's decisions on accreditation are based on the fulfilment or lack of fulfilment of the Standards and Peer Reviewers' final external evaluation report with conclusions and recommendations for improvement.

Types of accreditation decisions:

- *Full accreditation:* the duration of full accreditation is 5 years.
- Full accreditation for the maximum period must be conferred if all Standards are fulfilled.
- *Conditional accreditation:* the review follows after 1 year to check fulfilment of the conditions.

Conditional accreditation, meaning that accreditation is conferred for the entire period stated but with conditions. Conditional accreditation can be used in cases where a few Standards are only partly fulfilled or in cases where more Standards are not fulfilled. The seriousness of the problem is to be reflected in the specification of conditions.

Denial or withdrawal of accreditation: must be the decision, if many Standards are not fulfilled, signifying severe deficiency in the quality of the higher education institution or programme that cannot be remedied within a few years.

If the decision on accreditation will be *denial or withdrawal of accreditation*, the higher education institution or educational programmes will be excluded or not listed on the Register 2 (accredited higher education institutions) and Register 3 (accredited educational programmes) of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

2.5 Supporting documents	
1. Quality Profile and Evaluation Criteria Forms (External Evaluation Criteria for Higher Education Institution and Educational Programmes: Bachelor, Master's degree, PhD, Presidency (PGST), CPD, Applied Bachelor, VET; Centres for Simulation in Medicine and Healthcare Professions Education)	**Link**
2. Examples of filled out Quality Profile and Evaluation Criteria Forms	**Link**

10.6 ESG Standard 2.6 Reporting

Standard: Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

The external evaluation of the quality of a higher education institution/educational programme is followed by the preparation of the final report of the External Expert Commission (EEC) including attachments (copies of supporting documents, the results of the survey of students and educators, materials of photo and video filming of a site visit), which is compiled in accordance with the ECAQA Standards for Accreditation and the following requirements of Guidelines for external evaluation of a Higher Education Institution and Educational Programmes (order of the General Director No. 5 of February 17, 2017). Link to Google Drive

The structure of the external evaluation report includes:

Title page

- In the upper right corner please indicate the addressee: "To the ECAQA Accreditation Council"
- In the centre of the page please indicate the name of the higher education institution or the specialty of the educational programme seeking accreditation (in case of a specialised (programmatic) accreditation) (Annex 2),
- date of the EEC site visit

Contents – list of the report sections including annexes
EEC composition – information on the ECAQA order on creation of the EEC and the accreditation of the higher education institution (or educational programme) – EEC composition indicating the full names, job titles and principal place of employment of experts.
1. **General part of the report**
1.1 Presentation of the higher education institution 1.2 Information on the previous accreditation (if any) 1.3 Analysis of the report on self-evaluation of the higher education institution (educational programme), which includes: – general evaluation of the higher education institution (educational programme) – detailed analysis of the information provided by the higher education institution for compliance with the Standards for Accreditation – level and quality of the higher education institution (educational programme) self-evaluation – summary of conclusions
1.4 Description of the EEC site visit: – brief description of the events, organisation of the visit, schedule, – description of cooperation with the higher education institution – summary of the EEC conclusions on the external evaluation and the visit
2. EEC report body
2.1 Analysis of compliance with the Standards for Accreditation
2.2 Conclusion
2.3 Recommendations on improvement of the higher education institution's activities (improvement of the educational programme)
3. Recommendation for the ECAQA Accreditation Council
Annexes including the List of Documents of HEI that reviewed by the EEC

The final EEC report contains recommendations for improvement, on the basis of which the university/college develops an action plan for improvement

The report must be complete, reliable, objective, have all accompanying documentation and completeness in accordance with the recommended structure.

The EEC final report is the basis for the ECAQA Accreditation Council's final decision on the accreditation status of a higher education institution/educational programme. The EEC final report is posted on the ECAQA website http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/register-of-accredited-hei-pge-cpd-olleges/institutional-accreditation1/cpd-organisation to inform all stakeholders.

The final report reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education institution/educational programme seeking accreditation, identifies achievements and areas for improvement, and also includes recommendations for continuous renewal.

The process of preparing and writing the final EEC report includes the following algorithm:

1. Analysis (review) of the self-evaluation report for compliance with ECAQA Standards for Accreditation is carried out before the visit to the university/college and validation of the report data during the visit to the university/college (quantity, quality, processes, documentation). This is necessary to determine not only the evidence of the actual practice of the university in the implementation of the Standards for Accreditation, but also to improve the descriptive part of the self-evaluation report by means of the recommendations of the EEC members when visiting the university.

2. EEC members exchange received information at the end of each day of the site visit. The exchange allows each member of the EEC to receive the maximum amount of information and evidence, including an opinion from an expert-student and an expert-representative of potential employers (business, healthcare, pharmacy, etc.).
3. Each EEC member prepares a short written conclusion (in electronic form) on each part of the schedule of the visit (interviews with university staff, visits to university departments, interviews with stakeholders). A brief conclusion is transferred to the Chair of the EEC.
4. Before and during the visit, a representative of the university who is responsible for self-evaluation provides EEC members with information (in electronic and/or paper form) about the departments included in the schedule of the EEC visit.
5. By the end of the visit, each member of the EEC forms proposals for each standard of accreditation, taking into account the area of responsibility of each member of the EEC.
6. On the last day of the visit, the experts carry out the following operations in confidence:
   - final discussion of the results of the external evaluation of the higher education institution/educational programme, analysis of the information received during the visit. In addition to the evaluation of the main indicators of the university/college for 5 years, experts take into account the new data that improve the indicators of the higher education institution/educational programme, but were not included in the self-evaluation report;
   - preparation of the draft final report of the EEC. During this period, experts may request additional information from the representative of the higher education institution for their report. The last page of the report shall be signed by each member of the EEC;
   - making a collegial decision and preparing recommendations for improvement (constructive and achievable ones) and recommendations for the ECAQA Accreditation Council (to accredit for a period of 5 years, accredit conditionally for a period of 1 year or not to accredit), which should be announced to the management of the university/college;
   - conclusions of experts must correspond to the descriptive part of the report and fully reflect the opinions of all members of the EEC, especially in relation to the part containing criticism (the conclusions should be competent, correct and reasonable).
7. The draft final report of the EEC is submitted to ECAQA no later than 7 days after the end of the visit to the university/college. As a rule, the preliminary results of the external evaluation (a draft EEC report) are delivered to the coordinator from ECAQA at the end of the final day of the site visit, which is ensured by the strict adherence to the schedule of the EEC visit, the coordinated work of the expert team. The report should make appropriate references to the self-evaluation and the database of the higher education institution. The aggregate data obtained by EEC members should be supported by links to the relevant documentation in the main part of the report and copies of documents in the annexes.
8. Subsequently, ECAQA sends the EEC report to the university/college representative who is responsible for the self-evaluation to deliver the report to their management to eliminate any factual inaccuracies. The report is submitted to the management of the university/college for the approval up to 7 calendar days.
9. After receiving comments from the university/college, the Chair of the EEC makes the final editing of the report and obtains approval from the EEC members.
10. The final report is sent to the ECAQA Director General, which is followed by presentation of the report along with the Quality Profile and Criteria Evaluation Form at the meeting of the Accreditation Council. A final written report by the EEC includes recommendations for the ECAQA Accreditation Council.
11. The Chair of the EEC prepares a presentation on the results of the work of the EEC and reports to the Accreditation Council. The Accreditation Council members discuss the final report and ask clarifying questions for making a final decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution or educational programme.

According to the Republic of Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Sciences' (MES RK) Order No.629/Article 4./p.16-17, of November 1, 2016 and Order No.531, the information about the external evaluation of HEIs and educational programmes should be submitted to the MES RK in order to be listed on the National Registers 2 and 3 of the MES RK.

2.6 Supporting documents	
1. Guidelines for Report Preparation of the EEC	Link

10.7 ESG Standard 2.7 Complaints and appeals

Standard: Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

ECAQA has developed a procedure for receiving and considering complaints from higher education institutions and individuals regarding decisions, actions (or inaction) of ECAQA employees and experts, members of the EEC.

In this regard, the Complaints Commission operates on the basis of the Regulation on the Complaints Commission (approved by Order No. 5 of February 17, 2017).

Complaints should be submitted to ECAQA in writing by email, regular mail.

All complaints must be identified, include the name of the higher education institution and signed by the chief executive officer, or include the name of the applicant with their signature.

The Complaints Commission includes three permanent members for a term of 3 years and non-permanent members for the period of a complaint consideration. The members should not have a conflict of interest with the applicant organisation or an individual applicant.

A complaint is recorded in a registration log, sent to the Director General of ECAQA and subsequently delivered to the Complaints Commission Chair in confidence. Complaints may be submitted during the external evaluation of a higher education institution/educational programme.

When considering complaints, the commission may request copies of the necessary documents, additional information from ECAQA, the EEC Chair and members.

The meeting of the Complaints Commission is a closed session and can be held online in a remote format.

The decision on a complaint is made by open voting on the basis of the majority of votes of the members of the Complaints Commission and is drawn up in minutes of the meeting signed by the Chair and all members of the Commission.

Within 30 calendar days after receiving the complaint, the Complaints Commission makes a decision and recommendations on the complaint and delivers them to the Director General of ECAQA.

To date, no complaints have been submitted yet.

The ECAQA's Appeal Commission is established to ensure protection of interests, guarantees, and enforcement of the rights of higher education institutions.

The appeal is a reasoned written application from the higher education institution for disagreement with the results of decision of the External Expert Commission (Reviewers) and the ECAQA's Accreditation Council decision on accreditation.

An appeal is filed within the next 7 working days from the date when the higher education institution has received the written notification of the Accreditation Council's decision on accreditation.

The Appeals Commission makes a decision containing recommendations on the appeal for further consideration and decision within 30 calendar days from the receipt of the appeal.

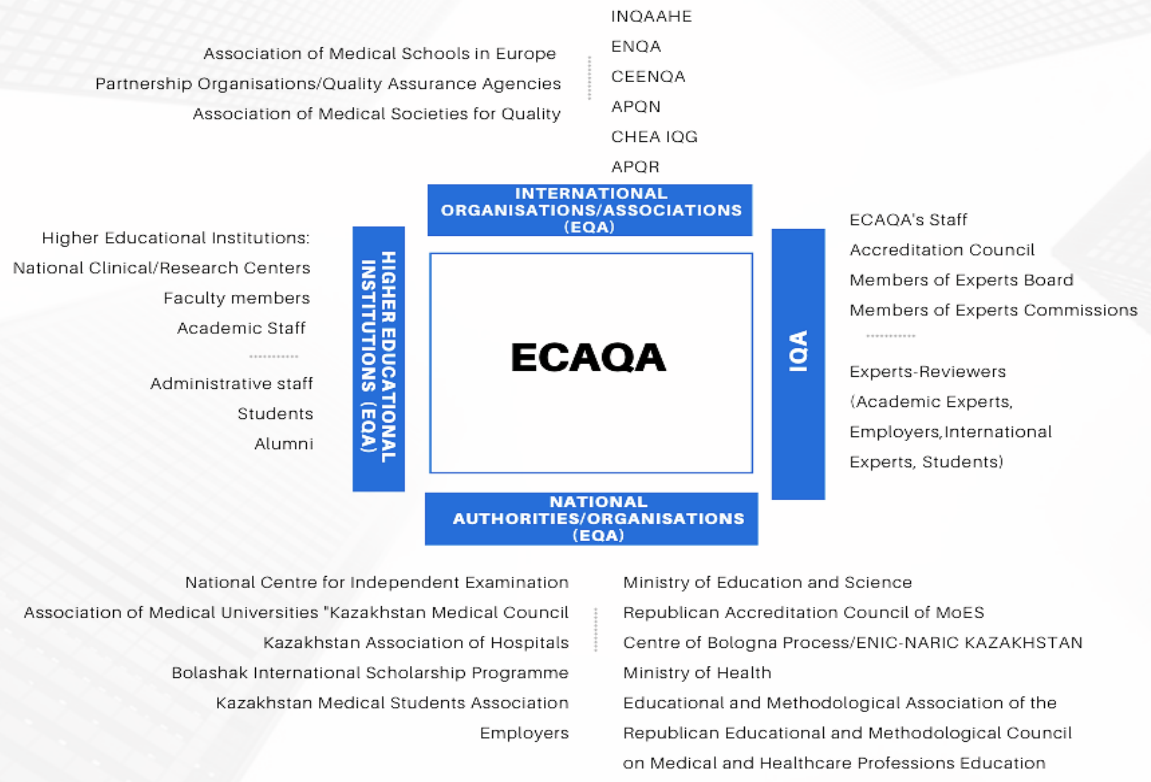
The agency has published and posted the procedure for appeals related to its external evaluation and decision-making process on ECAQA's web-site. The following actions of the accrediting agency related to accreditation are subject to appeals: denial or withdrawal of accreditation.

The information about appeals procedure is available for higher education institutions on the agency's web-site and in the ECAQA Regulations on Appeals Commission: http://www.ecaqa.org/en/accreditation/ecaqa-s-process-for-appeals-and-complaints

2.7 Supporting documents	
1. Regulations on the ECAQA Complaints Commission	Link
2. Regulations on the ECAQA Appeals Commission	Link

11. Information and opinions of stakeholders

The ECAQA involves the main stakeholders and they contribute to improvement of the agency's external quality assurance activities. Specifically, the stakeholders are divided into two major categories and are involved in the external and internal quality assurance as shown in the Figure 5 below:



The Ministry of Education and Science holds the top position of legal hierarchy among all stakeholders since it establishes the procedure for recognition of local and foreign accrediting agencies. Moreover, it has authority to recognize accrediting agencies, accredited higher educational institutions and educational programmes while being the part of external QA.

Republican Accreditation Council of the Ministry of Education and Science is legitimized by the order of MES RK to conduct cyclical external review of QA agencies every 5 years. The Republican Accreditation Council holds a high degree of authority to review and evaluate the work of QA agencies including ECAQA. Hence, this Council authorizes the QA agencies in Kazakhstan. A QA agency is requested to send an annual report about its external quality assurance activities and recommendations for further actions and improvement.

Centre of Bologna Process/ENIC-NARIC KAZAKHSTAN participates in external quality assurance by providing a list of accredited higher/ postgraduate education and educational programmes. It is considered as a database of all educational programmes in Kazakhstan.

The Ministry of Health is one of the key external stakeholders which holds the authority to develop healthcare standards. ECAQA strives to build strong relationships with the Ministry of Health since they implement national academic standards in medical education and other healthcare professions education. Hence, the agency operates in accordance with those standards.

National Centre for Independent Examination is accountable for organising final examinations for medical students in their final year of studies. Therefore, examination centres are authorized to check the quality of graduates' knowledge, thus sharing their own experience to improve the standards for accreditation. Their suggestions aid in focusing on aspects such as assessment of standards, educational programme evaluation.

Association of Medical Universities "Kazakhstan Medical Council" has signed Memorandum of Cooperation with ECAQA to develop joint recommendations for quality assurance of educational

programmes of higher and postgraduate education. In addition, specialists from the Association assist to implement the best international practices in the healthcare system of organisations such as the World Health Organisation.

Higher Educational Institutions consist of several subcategories: students, faculty staff, administrative staff and alumni. The main peculiarity of this category is that HEIs participate both in external and internal quality assurance processes. The external process subcategories of HEIs participate in institutional and programmatic accreditation as well as provide their feedback. Namely, students play a vital role in the QA process because they contribute by sharing their own experiences of studying in a certain organisation. Whereas, alumni and institutional staff share their vision on improvement of the HEI since the changes on quality directly affect these stakeholders. Internal QA deals with the development of quality culture and support of HEIs in capacity building.

National Clinical/Research Centres are interested in organisation of continuing professional development courses in the healthcare system. By including 14 Regional Healthcare Departments and Healthcare Departments in Almaty, Nur-Sultan, they allot budget for professional development programmes for doctors and nurses.

Regional/National Professional Associations. 10 Professional Associations deriving in their scope and mission of functioning signed Memorandum with ECAQA. Their main objective is to nominate an expert who can participate in reviewing various educational programmes.

Kazakhstan Medical Student Association conducts various activities ranging from professional practice exchange in medical education/public health to research exchange in reproductive health. While being an external stakeholder, the Association participates in the peer-review board.

Association of Medical Schools in Europe is one of the main international partners of ECAQA which is primarily concerned with the leadership and management of medical schools, and the question of how to run the medical school, and how to manage its relationship with the university hospital and other health-care partners. Activities of association include assistance in the educational/educational programme self-evaluation while being a part of the self-visit team.

International/Regional Associations and Networks for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE, ENQA, CEENQA, APQN, CHEA IQG, APQR) are partnership organisations that provide with QA framework and conduct joint activities such as workshops, seminars and meetings to improve the standards of quality assurance procedure. Furthermore, they share the best practices that have been successful in their own experience.

Partnership organisations/ quality assurance agencies and international organisations nominate international experts to engage them in research and international projects, as well as organise and hold joint international conferences and forums on dissemination of quality assurance practices.

ECAQA's Staff, Experts-Reviewers (Academic Experts, Employers, International Experts, Students) Members of Expert Board; Members of Experts Commissions are engaged in both external and internal quality assurance processes.

Feedback from Stakeholders. Improvement of the activities of the accrediting agency is based on the results of feedback on the work of External Expert Commissions and organisational activities of ECAQA during training events and preparation for accreditation of higher education institutions and their educational programmes.

The accrediting agency gets feedback from stakeholders in the following way:

1) Getting feedback from employees of higher education institutions, based on the results of the work of an External Expert Commission (EEC);
2) Receiving feedback during training seminars for ECAQA experts;
3) By questioning students and educators as part of the work of an External Expert Commission (EEC);
4) By addressing the feedback section on the ECAQA's website;
5) By receiving comments, letters of appreciation from accredited higher education institutions.

ECAQA uses questionnaires designed for different groups of students, educators, employees and accreditation experts. The questionnaires are developed and approved by the ECAQA Expert Board (Minutes No. 2 of May 18, 2018).

To conduct a survey of employees of higher education institutions, **a questionnaire, which includes 10 questions**, is applied. The survey is carried out after an external evaluation (Annex 1). The results of the survey of employees of 13 higher education institutions, which were peer-reviewed in 2019, showed that ECAQA experts had strictly followed the schedule of visiting the organisation, observed ethics and had been characterized by professionalism of the expert work. At the same time, representatives of the organisations implementing continuing professional development programmes (continuing education) in health care noted that the Standards for accreditation of organisations for continuing education should be revised in order to simplify the formulation of criteria and make adjustments to the Standard 1 (Mission and outcomes) and Standard 5 (CPD provision).

Based on the results of the external evaluation of higher education institutions and educational programmes from July to December 2020, a survey of 20 employees of 9 organisations was conducted; at the same time, the respondents assessed the work of accreditation experts, the external evaluation procedure, made proposals on the ECAQA Standards for accreditation of educational institutions in health care. The results of the survey are presented in Figure 6.

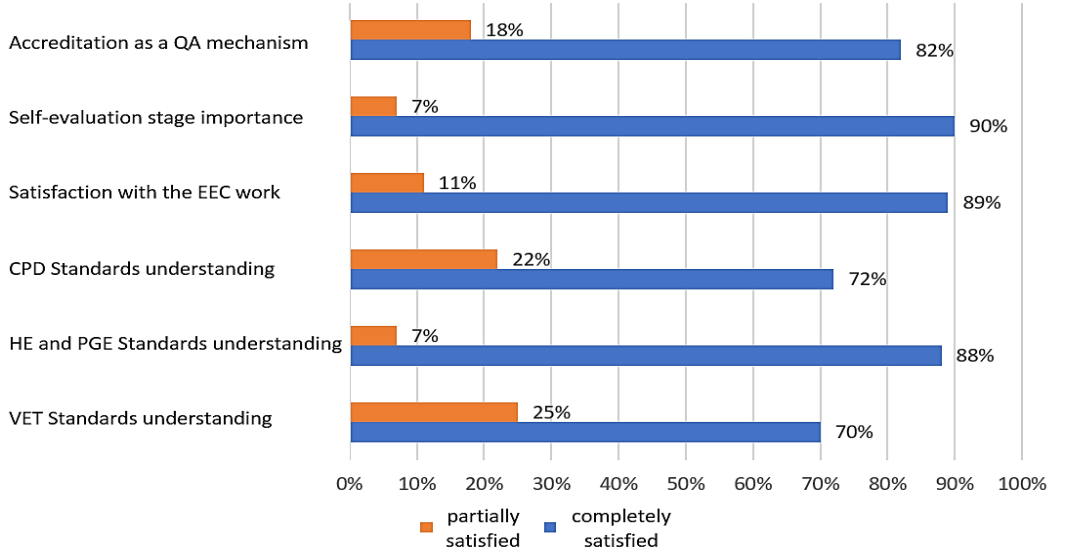


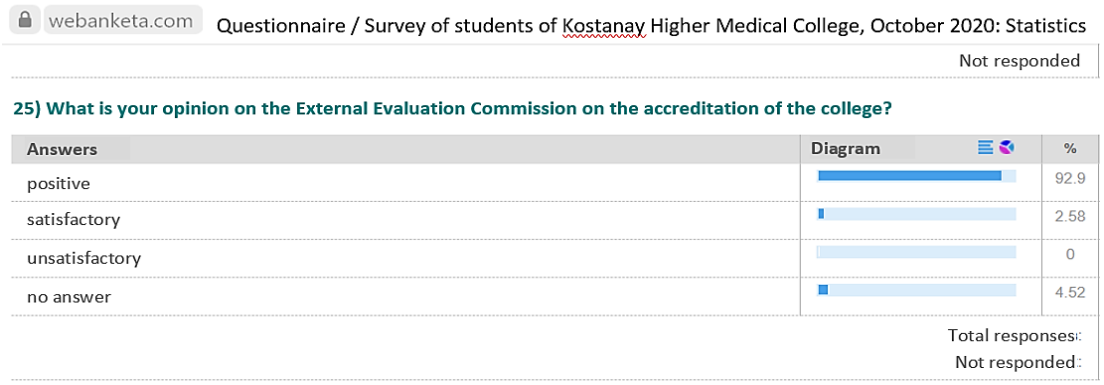
Figure 6. Results of the survey

Note: partially satisfied (respondents agree), completely satisfied (respondents agree), CPD – Continuing Professional Development, VET – Vocational Education and Training, HE – higher education, PGE – postgraduate education, EEC – External Expert Commission, QA – quality assurance.

Thus, according to the results of the survey of students, trainees and trainers of higher education institutions in health care, no negative comments on EEC were received.

Training seminars are also accompanied by feedback from seminar participants. For example, a survey of 35 participants from 33 organisations of vocational education and training and higher education institutions was carried out prior to the start of the seminar on "Quality Assurance in Nursing Education" held together with Johanna Heikkile, PhD, Chief Adviser to the Rector of JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Finland, ECAQA partner http://www.ecaqa.org/en/ecaqa-partner on September 21-22, 2018. At the same time, 42.85% of respondents noted that accreditation was necessary to ensure the quality of education, 28.57% of participants had experience of participating in the accreditation procedure, but 7.14% of respondents did not understand the difference between certification, audit and accreditation, and 21.43% of participants considered accreditation to be a formal procedure. When answering the question of “What do you expect from the seminar?”, 42.86% of respondents replied “Answers to problematic questions”, 57.14% of participants answered “Obtaining information on accreditation”, 50% of respondents replied “Opportunity to communicate with colleagues and exchange experience”, 78.57% of participants responded “Obtaining examples of the best international practice in education”.

Questionnaire of students and educators as part of the work of an External Expert Commission (EEC) at higher education institutions also includes questions about the quality of the EEC work. In this connection, the questionnaire consisting of 26 questions includes the question No. 25 that is "What is your opinion on the work of the External Expert Commission on the accreditation of this higher education institution?" and No. 26 that is "Do you think it is necessary to conduct accreditation of higher education institutions or educational programmes?" As a rule, more than 90% of respondents note the positive work of the EEC and believe that accreditation is an important mechanism for quality assurance in education (Fig. 7).


webanketa.com Questionnaire / Survey of students of Kostanay Higher Medical College, October 2020: Statistics

Not responded

25) What is your opinion on the External Evaluation Commission on the accreditation of the college?

Answers	Diagram	%
positive		92.9
satisfactory		2.58
unsatisfactory		0
no answer		4.52

Total responses:
Not responded:

Figure 7. Results of feedback from college students on the EEC work

ECAQA's website has a "Feedback" section http://www.ecaqa.org/en/events/ecaqa-feedback-and-reviews/feedback where anyone can leave comments and send questions related to accreditation and apply for inclusion of the data in the expert database.

Letters of appreciation and recommendation from ECAQA accredited organisations are considered as a feedback on the ECAQA activities. Link to the Letters

12. Recommendations and main findings from previous review(s) and agency's resulting follow-up (for second and subsequent reviews only)

ECAQA is applying for the first time for the external review of the agency by ENQA and for inclusion in the EQAR.

13. SWOT analysis of the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Recognition by the national competent authority: National Accrediting Agency in Higher Education including Medical and Healthcare Professions Education that authorized and recognized by the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Sciences and endorsed by the Ministry of Health; ECAQA is listed on 1) Directory of Organisations that Recognize/Accredit Medical Schools (DORA) of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER), USA and 2) the Council for Higher Education Accreditation International Quality Group (CHEA/CIQG) International Directory, USA and 3) APQR, PRC Active Involvement of ECAQA Staff/Consultant and contributing to international events of WHO and WFME as well as International and Regional Quality Assurance Networks	Improvement of Programme for Experts (Reviewers) with Individual Expert (Reviewer) Portfolio Development of international/ regional collaboration with health professions associations (Public Health, Dentistry, Pharmacy) Application of systematic approach to identify specific

conference and trainings (ENQA, INQAAHE, APQN, CEENQA, CHEA IQG); Involvement and engagement of all relevant stakeholders to external and internal quality assurance and institutional and subject-specific professional accreditation process; . Using Standards and procedures that are predetermined and specific to Medical Education and other Healthcare Professions and based on the WFME Global Standards (BME, PGME, CPD, Master's Degree Programmes) (2015), ORPHEUS/AMSE/WFME Standards on PhD (2015), ESG (2015); International Experts and EEC Members (Reviewers)s are highly qualified as professionals and educators, competent and well trained; Independent Decision making by ECAQA Accreditation Council that based on specific WFME Global Standards (BME, PGME, CPD) and fundamental principles of WHO/WFME Guidelines, ESG (2015), APQN-Chiba Principles; Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms and its Regular Review for Improvement; International Collaboration and Partnership that is beneficial for both agency and Higher Education Institutions	areas for thematic analysis and publications Improvement of public information on ECAQA external evaluation activities through registration ECAQA's Newsletter/Journal in quality assurance in higher education

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
International Collaboration and Partnership with leading accrediting agency in medical and other healthcare professions education; International Collaboration and Adoption the International Quality Assurance Principles and best practice to meet the WFME, ENQA, APQR, INQAAHE, fundamental requirements for EQA and IQA of QAA Enabling the Quality Assurance Units of Higher Education Institutions for Institutional and Research Capacity Building and Faculty Competencies Development to fulfil the Standards for Institutional and Programmatic Accreditation in compliance with WFME Global Standards, ENQA ESG (2015), APQN-Chiba Principle.	Global Crisis with COVID-19 that impacted to many aspects of EQA and International Collaboration Frequently Changes in Regulations and Laws regarding the policy for recognition of QAA by the authority body in the country

14. Current challenges and areas for future development

Since starting its operation in 2017, ECAQA has contributed to the development of a transparent and reliable national quality assurance system for higher education. To date, the work regarding medical education and other health professions education includes the development and implementation of accreditation standards similar to the European standards and guidelines for self-evaluation of HEI and educational programmes, external quality assurance procedures and training of experts in accreditation following the WFME Global Standards and ESG.

The self-assessment of the agency's EQA and IQA for compliance with ESG has helped highlight both issues of content and process that could be addressed to enhance institutional and programmatic accreditation.

As such, this self-assessment report takes into consideration the extensive work done by the agency in external quality assurance activities and internal quality assurance for moving forward to improve the overall culture and system of quality improvement in medical and health professions education.

ECAQA has conducted this self-assessment and a comprehensive review of its external quality assurance activities, including the documentation related to medical and other healthcare professions education accreditation that allowed to identify the current challenges and areas for improvement.

Evidence from our experience in institutional accreditation of HEIs, CPD providers, nursing colleges, and external evaluation of educational programmes reinforces the need to have competent faculty that are committed to accreditation and support capacity building of the staff of Quality Assurance Units of Higher Education Institutions. This should include the implementation of the faculty development programme, leadership training and the development of the IQA System at the HEIs, conducting the workshops focusing on standards (particularly those that are difficult to interpret and frequently non-compliant).

The key elements of an EQA and IQA are already in place and what is needed now is the improvement in the system that includes the agency's activities for further development and improvement focused on the following areas:

- advanced training of experts (reviewers) as team leaders, especially, on external evaluation of residency programmes (postgraduate specialty training);
- revision and updating of the standards and procedures used in the accreditation process that correspond to international good practice and are based on the stakeholders' feedback analysis;
- use of a systematic approach to the revision of EQA and IQA to identify the areas that are specific for thematic analysis and publication;
- development of the agreed statement and policy on principal stakeholder involvement and their effective engagement in external quality assurance and the agency's activities.

ECAQA aims to be actively involved in international events and establish effective collaboration with partners to build its capacity and, as a national quality assurance agency, contribute to the enhancement of quality and the development of a quality culture in higher education, including the health professions education institutions.

Glossary of Terms

APQR	Asia-Pacific Quality Register
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
ECAQA	Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care
EEC	External Expert Commission
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
HEI(s)	Higher Education Institution(s)
KZT	Kazakhstan tenge
LLP	Limited Liability Partnership
MES RK	Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan
MoH RK	Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan
WFME	World Federation for Medical Education

Annexes

1. Table of ECAQA documents on Google Drive:

1. Documents for ESG Part 3	Link
2. ECAQA Standards for Accreditation	Link
3. ECAQA Guidelines	Link
4. Quality Profile and Evaluation Criteria Forms	Link
5. ECAQA Regulations	Link
6. Expert Board Documents	Link
7. CV of ECAQA's Accreditation Council	Link
8. Job Descriptions of ECAQA employees	Link
9. International Membership Certificates	Link
10. Feedback on ECAQA (Letters of appreciation)	Link
11. Applications for Accreditation and FORM	Link
12. Contracts for Accreditation 2019-2021	Link
13. Registration logs of accreditation certificates	Link
14. Signed Code of Conduct and Statements	Link
15. Accreditation Council Minutes	Link
16. Memoranda with Partners	Link
17. Documents on ECAQA SAR (Order, Programme)	Link