

# TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE IN UKRAINE: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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**Annotation.** *Since the 1980s, cross-border higher education through the mobility of students, academic staff, programmes/institutions and professionals has grown considerably. While this form of higher education has many benefits for students, institutions and society, it also raises questions of quality and legitimacy of the education provision due to the general lack of clear and consistent international regulation. In the Chapter it is proved that these issues are the subject of close attention of both international (UNESCO, OECD, European Council, European Commission, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) and national organizations all over the world.*

*After Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity in 2014, radical reforms of the higher education sector began, aimed at establishing an autonomous system aligned with the European higher education and research areas, to develop quality assurance systems at national and institutional levels, to ensure accountable and autonomous university management and governance, and to involve students and the other stakeholders into decision-making processes. The Law of Ukraine on Higher Education adopted in the summer of 2014 established the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA) as collegial body and public non-profit organization responsible for quality assurance in higher education in Ukraine.*

*In the Chapter, we state that the activities of the National Agency in the field of quality assurance in higher education are in line with a number of UN Sustainable Development Goals, the priority of which is Goal 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. Ensuring the flexibility and relevance of external quality*

assurance procedures is one of the main tasks of the National Agency under martial law, as well as strengthening its advisory and communication role with various categories of international partners. Cross-border quality assurance remains one of the most important areas of internationalisation of higher education in Ukraine and a priority of the National Agency.

The paper analyses the current practices of quality assurance in higher education, which provide for the compliance of the National Agency's activities with specific standards from the policy document of the European Higher Education Area – Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Since 2022, most sectoral expert councils have included international experts – representatives of higher education institutions from Poland, the USA, Spain, Austria, the UK and the Netherlands. The policy of involving international experts in expert groups is being gradually implemented. Thus, the register of experts already includes 42 international experts from Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, the Czech Republic, Belgium, the USA, Norway, France, Austria, Switzerland and other European countries. Such steps will ensure that accreditation procedures in Ukrainian higher education comply with international standards and principles and strengthen the confidence of international partners in national approaches to reforming higher education based on openness and integrity.

**Key words:** transnational higher education, cross-border higher education quality assurance, European integration, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), Ukrainian higher education system, state policy in the higher education quality assurance, National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, double/joint degree programme accreditation, institutional accreditation.

## 초국가적 차원에서의 우크라이나 고등교육의 품질 보장 : 전망과 과제

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**국문초록.** 1980년대 이후, 학생 교환, 교수 파견 등 국경을 넘는 고등교육 협상이 크게 증가했다. 이와 같은 교육은 학생과 파견 기관 그리고 사회에 많은 혜택을 제공하지만, 동시에 명확하고 일관된 국제 규제의 부재로 인해 어려움이 있는 것도 사실이다. 이 연구에서는

UNESCO, OECD, 유럽 이사회(European Council), 유럽 연합 집행 기관(European Commission), 유럽 고등교육 품질보증협(European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education)과 국가 기관 등이 주목하고 있는 고등교육과 이에 대한 국제 규제에 대한 문제점을 보고 우크라이나의 사례를 분석하다. 2014년 마이단 혁명 이후 교육 분야에 있어서의 우크라이나가 추구하고 있는 교육 개혁 상황과 문제점을 살펴 볼 것이다. 우크라이나 고등교육 품질 보장 국가 기관이 지향하고 있는 UN의 포용적이고, 공평한 양질의 교육을 보장하는 목표를 위해 어떠한 전력을 다하고 있는지에 대해 살펴볼 것이다. 2022년부터 European Higher Education Area는 폴란드, 미국, 스페인, 오스트리아, 영국, 네덜란드와 같은 고등교육 기관 대표와 같은 국제 전문가들로 구성되었다. 독일, 폴란드, 리투아니아, 카자흐스탄, 체코 공화국, 벨기에, 미국, 노르웨이, 프랑스, 오스트리아, 스위스 및 기타 유럽 국가 출신의 42명의 국제 전문가가 이 목록에 포함되었다. 이와 같은 상황에서 우크라이나 고등교육에서 인증 절차가 국제 규제를 준수하고 있는지 개방적이고 정직한 교육 개혁이 가능할 것인지에 대해 논의 할 것이다.

**주제어:** 교육 개혁, 고등교육, 유럽통합, 품질 보증, 국가 고등교육 기관

Since the second half of the twentieth century higher education has acquired transnational characteristics under the influence of the dynamic globalisation processes in the world. The conceptual basis for the development of transnational higher education (TNE), set out in the OECD and UNESCO documents, rests on the principles of access, universality, openness, interculturalism, technological innovativeness and international quality standards (UNESCO Incheon Declaration “Education 2030: Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All”, 2015) (UNESCO, 2015). When exploring the topic of TNE, two challenges arise at the starting point: the broad definition, and the lack of data about the volume and location of this activity. The OECD-UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education (2005) define it as any education provision in which “the teacher, student, programme, institution/provider, or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders” (UNESCO/OECD, 2005, p. 9).

As we know, from the 1980s till now, TNE through the mobility of students, academic staff, programmes/institutions and professionals has grown considerably. Definitive figures for the volume of this type of activity are not available (partly due to the broad definition of the concept) and its relevance varies significantly from one country to another. In the European Higher Education Area, the most significant sending country is by far the United

Kingdom, with c. 532, 460 students enrolled in transnational higher education delivered by a UK provider in 2021/22 (HESA data), while other important sending countries are France, Spain and Germany. Outside the European Higher Education Area, the most significant sending country is Australia. For European sending countries, the primary receiving countries are in the Gulf region and the Asia-Pacific region (Gover & Blackstock, 2023).

TNE is a complex, multifunctional, multicomponent, sociocultural, historically determined phenomenon, logically linked to convergent and coherent trends in world education space. A three-tier system of quality assurance in TNE (international, regional, national), developed and implemented by international and national organisations, based on the method of open coordination and respecting the principles of: mutual trust between countries and respect for the diversity of higher education systems; similar procedures for the recognition of qualifications, degrees and academic work and their comparability; respect for national legislation in the field of higher education in the countries importing and exporting educational services.

The experience of interacting with foreign providers of low-quality educational services has made some importing countries cautious about most of these institutions and build stricter regulatory policies to protect their markets from educational products of dubious suppliers. This immediately caused an international debate on the quality of higher education institutions, the influence of national authorities on the functioning of higher education and unfair competition between local universities (Varghese, 2011).

Experts from the British Transnational Higher Education Observatory conducted a study to categorise regulatory practices for the import of transnational education services in different countries. As a result of the analysis, they identified and substantiated seven models based on the criterion of “rigidity of state procedures”. In Table 1 we summarise their characteristics for a clear comparison and determination of geographical localisation.

As can be seen from the table, a common trend that unites all countries is the significant expansion of TNE across different regions of the world. Many countries in Europe, North and South America, Africa and the Middle and Far East are interested in importing educational services from foreign providers, based on the establishment of minimum requirements for their registration and accreditation.

**Table 1 – Models of TNE regulatory practice**  
(author’s adaptation of Verbik & Jokivirta, 2005)

<b>Model</b>	<b>Features</b>	<b>Countries of application</b>
1	2	3
Open	Lack of special regulatory procedures and rules for controlling the provision of educational services by foreign providers, who are free to operate without any permits in the territory of the importing country.	Czech Republic, France, Malta, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, Serbia, Sri Lanka
Liberal	Foreign providers must first be accredited in the country where they are registered and submit documents to the relevant authorities or higher education institutions of the importing country.	Argentina, Bahrain, Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom
Moderately liberal	The importing country actively licenses and, in some cases, accredits multinational providers. This model requires a foreign institution to be pre-accredited by the competent authorities (Ministry of Education, etc.) of the host country. Accreditation procedures vary from country to country and include both mandatory registration and assessment against academic criteria. As a rule, the requirements are clear, simple and undemanding.	Australia, Canada, Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, Israel, Jamaica, Pakistan, Singapore, Vietnam
Transitional – from liberal to restrictive	Restrictive procedures are gradually being introduced, accompanied by changes in legislation on: 1) establishing mandatory registration and accreditation for foreign institutions in accordance with national legislation in order to continue to provide educational services or recognise their diplomas and qualifications; 2) establishing requirements for the possibility of operating in the country; 3) defining criteria for cooperation between local and foreign universities.	India

Table 1 (ending)

1	2	3
Transitional – from restrictive to liberal	Legislation is being updated to remove restrictions on foreign providers of educational services.	Japan, South Korea
Restrictive	The government or other higher education authority imposes strict conditions on foreign providers, which must establish full-fledged branches in the importing country (franchise agreements are not allowed). Only programmes and universities accredited by the national agency are allowed to operate and distribute. Foreign institutions must also change their curriculum to meet the standards of the host country.	Bulgaria, Cyprus, South Africa, United Arab Emirates
Highly restrictive	It is almost impossible to recognise qualifications obtained from transnational education providers. The government of the country does not recognise diplomas and qualifications from foreign universities. Foreign institutions that intend to issue a diploma recognised in the country must become part of the national higher education system.	Belgium (French-speaking part), Greece.

The study shows, in particular, that there is a trend towards the provision of sustainable transnational educational services by the exporting country, adapted to the requirements of the importing country, which encourages both parties to cooperate in developing mutually beneficial regulatory policies. Such activities lead to the emergence of a new model, which experts have described as a “capacity-building model” (Verbik & Jokivirta, 2005).

As the TNE associated with the opening of the education sector to foreign providers, it is necessary to ensure that the widest possible range of educational service providers in the national market is included in the quality assurance system, and secondly, to develop common approaches and principles of quality assurance for both providers and users of educational services. In this regard, it is important to establish a dialogue and develop cooperation between relevant national quality assurance authorities of different countries (Joint Declaration, 2001). Currently, such a dialogue

is intensively taking place within the European Higher Education Area formation. However, significant differences between the standards, rules and approaches applied in different countries still remain. The development of international cooperation and information exchange on qualification systems and requirements can help qualification recognition organisations to more effectively assess and use the information provided by national quality assurance agencies.

We emphasise that the differences in national experience regarding the functioning of higher education institutions encourage partnerships to find mutually beneficial solutions, systematic monitoring of the TNE providers' activities and ensuring the quality of educational services they provide. It is the quality of educational services and their real competitiveness that are considered by international organisations as the main criteria for participation in this new market.

On a global scale for the first time, ten principles of implementing TNE to improve quality assurance mechanisms were developed by the Global Alliance for Transnational Education in the 1990s. They are:

Principle 1: Goals and objectives. Transnational educational programmes should have clear goals and objectives that are understandable to students and correspond to the specialisation of the university-provider of educational services.

Principle 2: Standards. The university-provider of higher education must guarantee students studying under transnational programmes that they meet the standards and quality criteria regardless of the place and technology of their implementation.

Principle 3: Legislation and ethics. TNE must comply with the law and be supported by the student's country of origin.

Principle 4: Recruitment of students. The interests of students enrolled in transnational education programmes should be fully considered in terms of fair and ethical treatment.

Principle 5: Human resources. The university providing transnational education programmes should have a sufficient number of highly qualified teaching and support staff to implement and support them for systematically evaluation and monitoring.

Principle 6: Material and financial resources. The provider university should guarantee the availability of an adequate environment and resources for the TNE, and that these resources will be maintained throughout the duration of the students' studies.

Principle 7: Teaching. Transnational education programmes and teaching methods should be pedagogically appropriate to the requirements of students.

Principle 8: Student support. The university must ensure that students are provided with adequate support to maximise their success in completing transnational study programmes.

Principle 9: Assessment. Transnational educational programmes should be systematically monitored and evaluated for further improvement and development.

Principle 10: Third parties. In the presence of third parties, primarily agents and other organisations involved by the TNE university provider, the relationship between them should be formalised in writing with a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of each party in joint activities (The Global Alliance for Transnational Education, 1997).

The analysis of bibliographic sources has shown that these ten principles later became the basis for the development of TNE regulatory framework, which over the past two decades has been embodied in a number of documents of leading international organisations with legislative powers. UNESCO, OECD, EC etc. pay priority attention to solving the outlined problems, as they represent partners in providing the necessary framework for regulating transnational trade in educational services. Joint agreements of leading international organisations, which are spreading both regionally and globally, serve as eloquent examples of cooperation in this area. They include the following: “Code of Professional Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education” (2001); “Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Transnational Higher Education” (2005); “Higher Education Cross Borders: A Guide to the Impact of the GATS on Transnational Education” (2006), “Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education: Where do we stand?” (2012).

As we can see, one of the first documents approved in 2001 was the Code of Professional Practice in the Delivery of Transnational Education. It contains eleven principles for the provision of transnational educational services. It is worth noting that experts considered this Code a reliable basis for practical application in the formation of a system of protection of consumers of transnational higher education services, which makes a significant contribution to the development of a quality culture on a global scale. In the process of TNE rapid development the Code of Professional Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education of UNESCO and

the Council of Europe was revised during the XII Annual Meeting of the European Network of Information Centres for the European Region in 2005. After debate and agreement in the Ministries of Education of European countries, the updated version of the Code of Professional Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education was approved at the 4th Session of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee on the Recognition of Qualifications in Bucharest in 2007 (Intergovernmental Committee of the Council of Europe/UNESCO, 2007).

The study of the document showed that it takes into account the provisions of the “UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education” (2005), which laid the foundation for the joint work of the relevant national bodies to coordinate actions in quality assurance in higher education (UNESCO/OECD, 2005). As we can see, the purpose of the Guidelines is to protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality educational services and to assist states in assessing the quality of higher education and its compliance with modern requirements. Having analysed this document, it should be noted that the Guidelines provide for the establishment of an international mechanism for quality assurance of higher education. Their purpose is to encourage the development of TNE provision that meets the needs of human and social development, opens up new opportunities and widens access to deepen students’ knowledge, and to support initiatives to manage the TNE quality provision appropriately and to combat dishonest providers. It is worth noting that the Guidelines are based on a relationship of mutual trust and respect between countries and respect for the diversity of their higher education systems. The effectiveness of this document largely depends on the ability to build the capacity of national systems to ensure the quality of higher education in developing countries. Intensification of capacity building initiatives undertaken by UNESCO and other multilateral agencies and bilateral donors will ensure that the document has a lasting and sustainable impact on these initiatives with the help of partners at regional and national levels. These are primarily non-governmental organisations, including higher education associations, student organisations, teachers’ associations, networks of quality assurance and accreditation bodies, recognition and awarding bodies, professional organisations, in strengthening international cooperation in the field of quality assurance in higher education. The Guidelines are intended to support measures to enhance and coordinate ongoing initiatives through enhanced dialogue and cooperation between these organisations.

In our opinion, the coordinating function of international organisations is not only to develop relevant documents, but also to monitor their implementation in order to identify certain shortcomings, misunderstandings, and deficiencies and to make timely adjustments in the context of rapidly changing globalisation and internationalisation processes. To meet these objectives, the OECD Secretariat conducted a large-scale study “Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education: Where do we stand?” to measure the extent to which countries and national stakeholders have implemented the Guidelines among OECD member states and partner countries (OECD, 2012). The main conclusion of the study is that all countries that participated in the survey demonstrated a high level of implementation of the recommendations. On average, the level of implementation of the recommendations by governments, higher education institutions, and accreditation agencies of OECD countries is 72 %. If we take into account the responses of student organisations on the implementation of recommendations, the level of implementation of the latter decreases to 67 %, but the number of missing data increases and, accordingly, the uncertainty of the study results. According to experts, it is important to note that universities are among the group of stakeholders that implement most recommendations with an average implementation index of 80 %, while the implementation index of governments is 76 %, accreditation agencies – 61 %, and student organisations – 51 % (OECD, 2012).

It is known that accreditation agencies are responsible for assessing the TNE quality in most countries, so the Guidelines apply directly to these institutions. The performance indicators for agencies includes several areas. Firstly, they measure the level of consideration of TNE during accreditation. Secondly, they assess the degree of interaction of international networks and cooperation between countries sending students and countries receiving students. Thirdly, they take into account how accurate and accessible information about standards, procedures and assessment results is provided by the agencies. Fourthly, the implementation of current international documents on the regulation of TNE is considered. Fifthly, the existence of mutual arrangements and agreements on the recognition of diplomas, quality assurance mechanisms, involvement of international organisations for the assessment of the quality of education, and benchmarking procedures are taken into account. The results of the study showed that, on average, the level of compliance with recommendations by agencies is lower than that of governments and universities. The index

of implementation of recommendations in OECD countries is 61 %, which is roughly in line with the index of non-member countries. For example, Australia, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Turkey, and the United Kingdom demonstrate comprehensive quality assurance of TNE (student mobility, programme mobility, institutional mobility, and distance education) by their accreditation agencies. At the same time, Slovenia and the Netherlands plan to ensure comprehensive quality of higher education within the next years from the date of the study. The Czech Republic, Israel, Korea, Jordan, and Belgium demonstrate limited capacity to ensure the quality of higher education by accreditation agencies. Almost all agencies in OECD countries, with the exception of the Czech Republic, Israel and Slovenia, have internal quality assurance procedures. Similarly, virtually all OECD agencies, with the exception of the Czech Republic, Israel, New Zealand, Slovenia and Turkey, undergo external assessment procedures (OECD, 2012, p. 18).

Researchers and experts from the OECD and UNESCO are convinced that there is no need to revise the recommendations, instead, countries should continue to disseminate best practices and implement the recommendations (OECD, 2009). In December 2008, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education considered the need to revise this document (Bennett et al., 2010.). The main conclusion was the belief that the recommendations of the Guidelines do not require revision and are in line with the best practices of associations of accreditation agencies in Latin America, Asia-Pacific, North America and Europe, including the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (2005) (ENQA, 2009).

It was also noted that hasty adjustments to the Guidelines would inhibit rather than stimulate the implementation of the recommendations. Even if the implementation of some of the recommendations is not clearly reflected in countries, they are reflected in documents and used to define standards in different regions of the world, for example, they are used by associations of regional associations of accreditation agencies. The main recommendation of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education seminar is to ensure that any TNE programmes comply with the current higher education standards. In Europe, this is reflected, in particular, in the Communiqué of the European Ministers responsible for Higher Education (2009), according to which “TNE should be guided by the European standards for quality assurance applied in the European Education Area and the UNESCO and OECD documents on the provision of quality TSE” (EC, 2009).

However, a 2022 report into the implementation of the Guidelines concluded that although the core principles were de-facto widely accepted, there was insufficient awareness of the Guidelines themselves amongst the relevant stakeholder groups, and implementation was also hindered by a lack of concrete support for developing procedures. It can also be noted that the Guidelines do not take into account almost two decades of developments in the interim, including national and regional quality assurance frameworks and the regional and global recognition conventions, and therefore appear somewhat outdated (Hopbach, 2022, p. 26). During the period of sixteen years since the publication of the Guidelines higher education has undergone deep transformation in many aspects with long-term impacts of the COVID pandemic yet to be identified (Bergan, 2021).

Taking into consideration this dynamism in TNE, it seems exaggerated to state, as some analysts have done, that “The greatest barrier to cross-border education is the absence of continental and internationally accepted accreditation guidelines in the Higher institutions.” (Lawal, 2019, p. 54). TNE has expanded irrespective of the absence of such accreditation regulations. In quality assurance, national quality assurance systems emerged in the vast majority of countries and are a common phenomenon; in addition, regional integration by establishment of common frameworks such as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) has been a main driving force in developing and implementing quality assurance at all levels (Hopbach, 2022, p. 15). First introduced in 2005 and updated in 2015, the ESG are designed to be applicable across the diverse range of higher education contexts in the European Higher Education Area, while still providing a core understanding and minimum practices to which all stakeholders can relate. As such they are necessarily fairly generic and are incorporated into more detailed regulation at national and local level, by governments, quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions. This approach is a factor in the success and widespread implementation of the ESG, but also means that there are still significant differences between national and regional quality assurance frameworks, which can be a barrier for internationalisation (Gover, Blackstock, 2023).

The membership of Ukrainian higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area and the dynamic process of Ukraine’s accession to the European Union, encourage us to dwell more on the issues of ensuring the quality of higher education in this country in transnational

perspective. After Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity in 2014, radical reforms of the higher education sector began, aimed at establishing an autonomous system aligned with the European higher education and research areas, to develop quality assurance systems at national and institutional levels, to ensure accountable and autonomous university management and governance, and to involve students and the other stakeholders into decision-making processes. The Law of Ukraine on higher education adopted in the summer of 2014 established the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA) as collegial body and public non-profit organization responsible for quality assurance in higher education in Ukraine (The National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, 2024d). NAQA grounds its activities on the principles of trust and mutual respect, aiming to disseminate them in the Ukrainian academic environment. These principles should lay the foundation for the reputational capital of Ukrainian higher education institutions, along with a new culture of quality and integrity. In the process of external quality assurance NAQA implements the paradigm of consultative evaluation and assists HEIs in their pursuit of excellence establishing a constructive dialogue and fruitful cooperation for continuous improvement of the higher education quality in Ukraine.

NAQA is responsible for setting the requirements for quality and transparency for institutions, programmes, and standards. It implements the state policy in the field of higher education, withstands modern challenges, and becomes the catalyst for positive changes in higher education in Ukraine in order to create a culture of its quality based on such values as partnership, trust, independence, professionalism, innovation, academic integrity, and transparency.

The major strategic goals of NAQA are to develop the culture of quality in higher education, to assure the quality of higher education and research, to meet the European standards of higher education quality assurance.

According to the current Ukrainian legislation NAQA's mandate includes:

- accreditation of study programmes of all three cycles (bachelor, master, PhD);
- accreditation of thesis defence committees;
- accreditation of independent evaluation organizations;
- institutional accreditation of higher education institutions;
- development of university rankings;
- compliance with academic integrity;

- the other activities (Annual Report on the State of Higher Education in Ukraine, contribution to the education policy regulations development, agreeing higher education standards etc.) (The National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, 2020).

Nowadays, NAQA is a network of about 5000 people, namely: 23 NAQA members, 65 Secretariat employees, 350 subject area experts, 4000+ accreditation experts and trainers who are located across the whole Ukraine. Organizational, financial, technical, information and other support for the NAQA activities are provided by the NAQA Secretariat which includes such departments as Financial Planning and Accounting, Public Relations and International Cooperation, Legal Support and Appeals, Human Resources and Organizational Support, Study Programmes Accreditation, Expert Service, Specialized Expert Council, Research Degrees and Analytics (The National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, 2022).

The mission of the NAQA is to catalyse positive changes in higher education and shape its quality culture. NAQA's Strategy is a guide to these reform efforts, defines the Agency's mission and values, declares strategic goals and directions for their implementation. The strategic goals of the National Agency are realized in three main directions:

1. Quality of educational services:

- guaranteeing the quality of educational programs through the introduction of an effective accreditation procedure and a rigorous attitude to the Agency's procedures and activities of higher education institutions;

- promoting the functioning of internal quality assurance systems in higher education institutions through the implementation of advisory and information activity and benchmarking of local quality systems;

- agreeing the standards and developing the criteria for higher education quality assurance based on the best international and national practices.

2. Recognition of the quality of scientific results:

- building a policy of research integrity through the introduction of transparent and effective procedures;

- introduction of certification procedures for research personnel that meet the best European standards;

- accreditation of specialized scientific councils on the basis of a developed provision and monitoring their activity.

### 3. Ensuring the systemic impact of the National Agency's activities

- monitoring and analysis of the results of higher education institutions' activities in ensuring education quality through the implementation of accreditation procedures and certification of research personnel;
- promoting the integration of the Ukraine's higher education system into the global educational and research communities by establishing partnerships with foreign quality assurance agencies, encouraging international cooperation among higher education institutions, and recognizing educational and research degrees obtained in foreign HEIs;
- ensuring effective interaction in the field of higher education quality assurance among all stakeholders through mutual respect, restoring trust, ensuring openness in communication;
- stimulating the participation of Ukrainian higher education institutions in international educational and scientific rankings based on the introduction of new qualitative criteria;
- use of global best practices while respecting national educational traditions;
- building our own positive reputation through earned confidence in the Agency on the part of educational process participants and stakeholders.

Based on 11 core values that are: partnership; innovation; responsibility; integrity; openness; transparency; independence; reliability; professionalism; demanding and trust enables the National Agency to meet contemporary challenges and accelerate the formation of a quality culture in Ukrainian higher education (The National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, 2024c).

One of NAQA's strategic objectives is the internationalization of the higher education in Ukraine in general and the activities of NAQA in particular. NAQA conducted a series of international events, seminars and webinars with QA colleagues from all over the world. The results of such meetings and bilateral cooperation are the revision and improvement of key procedures and documents, the development of new regulations and guidelines, the exchange of experience of activities during lockdown, including distant accreditation site visits, and advice and expertise of international experts on the quality of higher education. All events and results of such meetings are widely covered on NAQA website as well as on its official Facebook and Twitter pages. NAQA continuously seeks advice and expert assessment from international and national experts for the external evaluation of its procedures, documents and activities in general.

NAQA collaborates with National Erasmus Office, American Councils for International Education, British Council, USAID, and others. In December 2020 NAQA International Advisory Board was established and currently it includes 9 well-known international quality assurance and academic integrity experts (The National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, 2024a).

Cross-border quality assurance remains one of the most important areas of internationalisation of higher education in Ukraine and a priority of the National Agency. In 2024, the National Agency continued its membership in four international quality assurance and academic integrity organisations (in three of them – INQAAHE, CEENQA (Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education), ICAI (International Center for Academic Integrity) – obtain full membership, and in ENQA – associate membership).

In October 2022, the National Agency became a member of the new Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN).

Cooperation with ENQA takes place in several areas:

- partnership in joint projects,
- presentations at events organised by ENQA, and
- participation in regular webinars on the most pressing issues of higher education development in the European Higher Education Area.

The National Agency continues to work on creating conditions for full membership in ENQA and inclusion in the EQAR register. First, In December 2022, the project “Supporting European QA agencies in meeting ESG II” was launched, with ENQA as the project coordinator, and the National Agency, together with other partners, will bring all documents and procedures in line with the ESG, which will have a positive impact on the further verification procedure for obtaining ENQA membership. In general, by 2024, memoranda of cooperation have been signed with the (QAA, UK), the Central Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation (ZeVA, Germany), the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), the Agency for the Recognition and Quality Assurance of Education (ARQA, Kazakhstan), Hungarian Accreditation Commission (MAB). The text of the memorandum is being agreed with the main committee responsible for the evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions for the training of professional engineers in France (Commission des Titres d’Ingénieur, CTI) (The National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, 2024b).

In Ukraine HEIs may choose a suitable EQAR-registered agency included into the list approved by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The order dates back to 10 July 2019 No. 554-p. The EQAR-registered agencies conduct accreditations in Ukraine on the basis of their own criteria. Only final decision made by these Agencies on accreditation of study programmes in Ukraine are acceptable and equivalent to the accreditation by NAQA. The information about each accredited study programme is entered into the Ukrainian Unified State Electronic Database on Education (Кабінет Міністрів України, 2019).

As for the accreditation procedure of double degree or joint programs, NAQA does not have special procedure. The agency's Charter does not provide the possibility of accrediting a programme abroad. We can only accredit Ukrainian part of double degree or joint programs. But in accordance with the Section V Regulations on Accreditation of Educational Programmes and the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 2019 Ukrainian HEIs have the right to submit documents to the National Agency for accreditation examinations in the foreign agencies. If a foreign agency accredits a joint programme, including the Ukrainian component, we can recognise such accreditation in accordance with the Accreditation Regulations if the agency is on the list approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Appropriate changes have also been made to the Regulations on Accreditation of Educational Programmes, including international double degree programmes, taking into account the requirements of European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programs (EQAR, 2015). This document aims to tackle the issue of diverse national criteria and varying accreditation processes in European higher education that cause specific challenges for joint programmes. These challenges include multiple administrative procedures, conflicting criteria, and disparate accreditation timelines, which can lead to uncertainty and conflicting decisions, complicating the planning and organisation of joint programmes.

While there is no systematic count available regarding the overall number of joint programmes across the EHEA, about 60 % of higher education institutions responding to the QA-FIT survey (152 of 260) answered that their institutions offer such programmes (although this number does not equate to the number of joint programmes in existence as multiple institutions may be reporting the same programme). The Erasmus Mundus catalogue further shows that there are ±188 ongoing joint master programmes across 36 of the 49 EHEA member countries funded under that

mechanism. Of the 39 currently known jointly designed study programmes reviewed using the European Approach, 19 are part of an Erasmus Mundus Master for Joint Programmes (Biaggi, Cîrlan, Gover, Onița & Szabo, 2024). Taking into account the fact that Ukrainian universities are active participants in various Erasmus Program Projects, we believe that the implementation of European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programs is an urgent and necessary procedure in Ukraine.

Having said this, we should also note that cross-border quality assurance is not easy and several issues require close attention: EQAR-registered agencies conduct accreditations in Ukraine on the basis of their own criteria. However, Ukrainian legislation should be respected and it is therefore important to verify as part of the quality assurance process whether the study programme meets local legal requirements. For instance, all study programmes should meet the higher education standard adopted for a particular subject area by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Special requirements have been published for PhD programmes, elective courses, language of teaching, and so on. NAQA recommends foreign QA agencies to inform the Ukrainian HEIs that national Ukrainian legislation must be respected and should be followed accordingly.

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