

# ESG PART 2: STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

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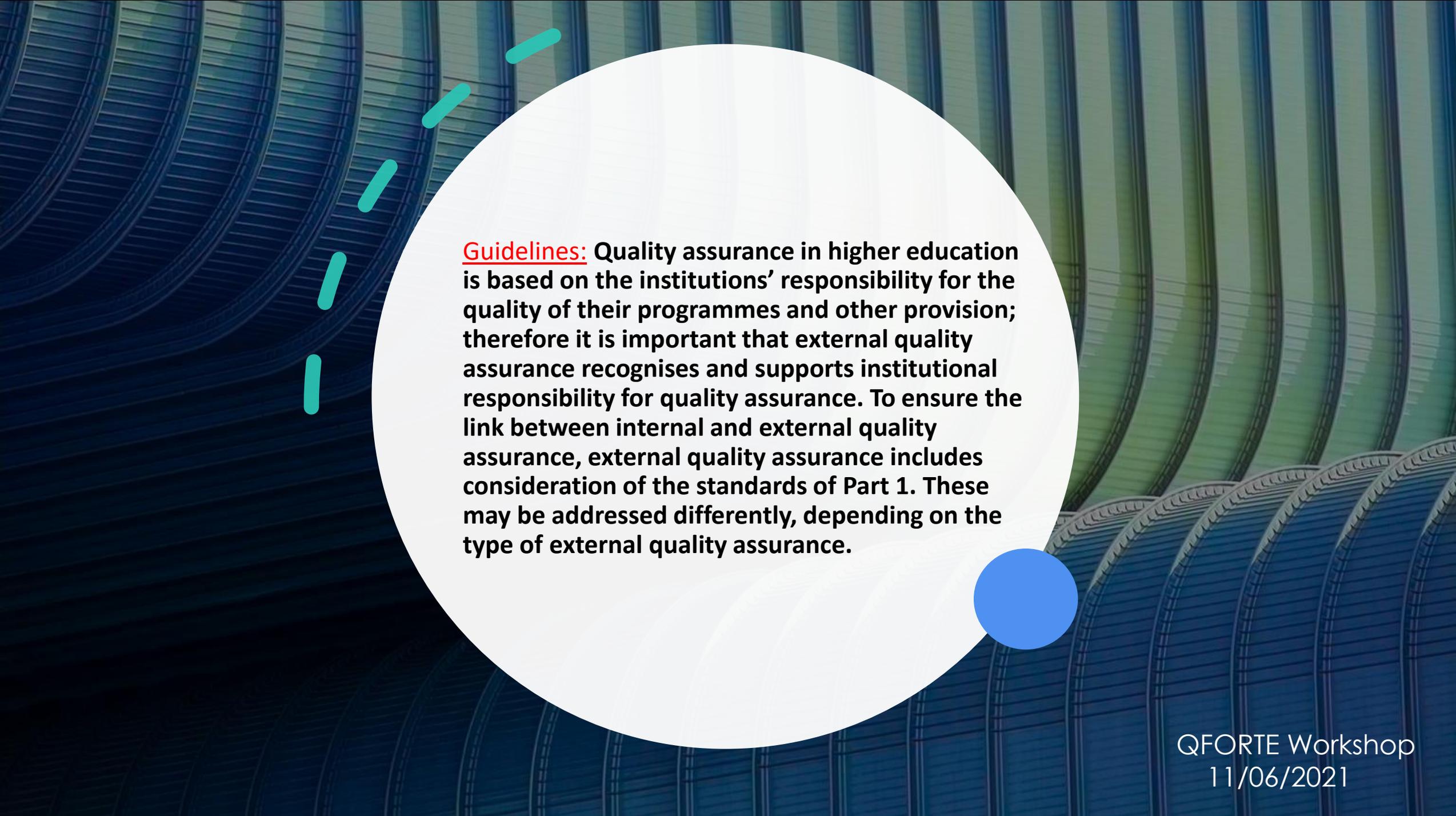


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## **2.1 . Consideration of Internal Quality Assurance:**

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



**Guidelines:** Quality assurance in higher education is based on the institutions' responsibility for the quality of their programmes and other provision; therefore it is important that external quality assurance recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance. To ensure the link between internal and external quality assurance, external quality assurance includes consideration of the standards of Part 1. These may be addressed differently, depending on the type of external quality assurance.

## 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.

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

The aims, objectives and implementation of the processes will ;

- bear in mind the level of workload and cost that they will place on institutions;
- take into account the need to support institutions to improve quality;
- allow institutions to demonstrate this improvement;
- result in clear information on the outcomes and the follow-up.

The system for external quality assurance might operate in a more flexible way if institutions are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance.

## 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.

**Guidelines:** External quality assurance carried out professionally, consistently and transparently ensures its acceptance and impact.

Depending on the design of the external quality assurance system, the institution provides the basis for the external quality assurance through a self-assessment or by collecting other material including supporting evidence. The written documentation is normally complemented by interviews with stakeholders during a site visit.

**Guidelines:** The findings of the assessment are summarised in a report (cf. Standard 2.5) written by a group of external experts (cf. Standard 2.4).

External quality assurance does not end with the report by the experts. The report provides clear guidance for institutional action. Agencies have a consistent follow-up process for considering the action taken by the institution. The nature of the follow-up will depend on the design of the external quality assurance.

## 2.4 Peer-review experts:

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

**Guidelines:** At the core of external quality assurance is the wide range of expertise provided by peer experts, who contribute to the work of the agency through input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students and employers/professional practitioners.

**In order to ensure the value and consistency of the work of the experts, they;**

- are carefully selected;**
- have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task;**
- are supported by appropriate training and/or briefing.**

**The agency ensures the independence of the experts by implementing a mechanism of no-conflict-of-interest.**

**The involvement of international experts in external quality assurance, for example as members of peer panels, is desirable as it adds a further dimension to the development and implementation of processes.**

## 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.

**Guidelines:** External quality assurance and in particular its outcomes have a significant impact on institutions and programmes that are evaluated and judged.

In the interests of equity and reliability, outcomes of external quality assurance are based on pre-defined and published criteria, which are interpreted consistently and are evidence-based. Depending on the external quality assurance system, outcomes take different forms, for example, recommendations, judgements or formal decisions.

## 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.

**Guidelines:** The report by the experts is the basis for the institution's follow-up action of the external evaluation and it provides information to society regarding the activities of an institution

**Guidelines:** In order for the report to be used as the basis for action to be taken, it needs to be clear and concise in its structure and language and to cover ;

- context description (to help locate the higher education institution in its specific context);
- description of the individual procedure, including experts involved;
- evidence, analysis and findings;
- conclusions;
- features of good practice, demonstrated by the institution;
- recommendations for follow-up action.

The preparation of a summary report may be useful.

The factual accuracy of a report is improved if the institution is given the opportunity to point out errors of fact before the report is finalised.

## 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.

**Guidelines:** In order to safeguard the rights of the institutions and ensure fair decision-making, external quality assurance is operated in an open and accountable way. Nevertheless, there may be misapprehensions or instances of dissatisfaction about the process or formal outcomes.

**Guidelines:**

**Institutions need to have access to processes that allow them to raise issues of concern with the agency; the agencies, need to handle such issues in a professional way by means of a clearly defined process that is consistently applied.**

**A complaints procedure allows an institution to state its dissatisfaction about the conduct of the process or those carrying it out.**

**In an appeals procedure, the institution questions the formal outcomes of the process, where it can demonstrate that the outcome is not based on sound evidence, that criteria have not been correctly applied or that the processes have not been consistently implemented.**



THANK YOU  
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QUESTIONS