



Self-Assessment Report

16 09 21 – R 20 10 21



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

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Development of the self-assessment report	5
3. The Greek higher education context and quality assurance	6
3.1. Brief overview of the Greek Educational System	6
3.2. The Context of Higher Education in Greece	6
3.3. Study Levels	8
3.4. Academic Year.....	8
3.5. Fees.....	9
3.6. Advisory bodies.....	9
3.7. Legislation – Developments	11
3.8. Access	13
3.9. A recent snapshot of the Greek Higher Education performance	13
3.10. Quality Assurance in the Greek Higher Education Sector	16
3.10.1. Establishment of Quality Assurance in Higher Education	16
3.10.2. Structure of the system of QA bodies in Greek Higher Education	16
3.10.3. The Authority	17
3.10.3.1. Mission	17
3.10.3.2. The Structure of the HAHE	17
3.10.3.3. The President.....	18
3.10.3.4. The Supreme Council.....	18
3.10.3.5. The Evaluation and Accreditation Council	19
3.10.3.6. The General Director and the Scientific and Administrative Service	20
3.10.4. Higher Education responsibilities.....	21
3.10.5. Quality Assurance responsibilities.....	24
3.10.6. Quality assurance results exploitation.....	25
3.10.7. Evaluation and publication of HAHE’s work	25
4. History, profile and activities of the Authority	26
5. Higher education quality assurance activities of the Authority	27
5.1. Accreditation	27
5.2. Follow up results: Continuous improvement	27
6. Processes and their methodologies	28
6.1. Accreditation.....	28
6.1.1. General Principles of Accreditation.....	28
6.1.2. The IQAS/study programme accreditation process	28
6.1.3. Building on results	32
6.1.4. Experts - The constitution of independent expert committees	32
7. The Authority’s internal quality assurance	33
7.1. Quality Manual	33
7.1.1. Quality Policy.....	33
7.1.2. Resources` Management	33

7.1.2.1. Quality Toolkit	33
7.1.3. Quality goal setting.....	34
7.1.4. Standards` setting and reviewing	34
7.1.5. Organization of quality assurance activities (for Institutions)	34
7.1.6. Measurement, analysis, improvement (system wide analysis)	34
7.1.7. Communication to institutions.....	35
7.1.8. Public information	35
7.1.8.1. Reports Publication: accountability and transparency	35
7.1.9. Follow up, monitoring activities and continuous improvement.....	35
7.1.10. Organization of HAHE external quality assurance and accreditation	35
8. The Authority’s international activities.....	36
9. Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (For QA Agencies - Part 3)	38
9.1. ESG Standard 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance	38
9.2. ESG Standard 3.2 Official status	39
9.3. ESG Standard 3.3 Independence	40
9.4. ESG Standard 3.4 Thematic analysis.....	42
9.5. ESG Standard 3.5 Resources	46
9.5.1. Infrastructure and technology	46
9.5.2. Human resources	47
9.5.3. Financial resources	49
9.5.4. Intangible resources	50
9.5.5. Working environment	51
9.6. ESG Standard 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct.....	51
9.6.1. Quality Policy.....	52
9.7. ESG Standard 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies	53
10. Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (External quality assurance-HEI-Part 2) 53	
10.1. ESG Standard 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance.....	53
10.2. ESG Standard 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose.....	57
10.3. ESG Standard 2.3 Implementing processes	59
10.3.1 The Accreditation Process.....	59
10.4. ESG Standard 2.4 Peer-review experts	61
10.4.1 Attracting and selecting experts.....	61
10.4.2 Evaluation and Accreditation Panels	63
10.4.3 Training and briefing of experts.....	65
10.5. ESG Standard 2.5 Criteria for outcomes.....	65
10.6. ESG Standard 2.6 Reporting	68
10.7. ESG Standard 2.7 Complaints and appeals.....	68
11. Information and opinions of stakeholders	69
12. Recommendations & main findings from previous review(s) and Authority’s resulting follow-up	70
13. SWOT analysis	71
14. Current challenges and areas for future development	73
S-O / Particularly High Prospects	73
O-W / Manageable Weaknesses.....	74
S - T / Manageable Threats	75
Glossary of Terms.....	76

Annexes	78
Annex I: Timeline of the SAR Preparation	78
Annex II: Summary of results.....	79
Annex III: Briefings and workshops	83
Annex IV: Recommendations, Changes and Improvements	86
Annex V: The HAHE Stakeholders.....	89
Annex VI: Feedback from experts.....	90
Annex VII: ESG-HAHE Standards alignment.....	91
Annex VIII: Findings from IQAS & USP accreditation	94
IQAS Accreditation	94
USP Accreditation.....	94
Annex IX: List of Documents.....	99
Legislation	99
Manuals.....	99
Accreditation Documents.....	99
Reports & Decisions.....	99
HAHE Accreditation Reports	99
Annex X: Accreditation Plan 2021 (Jan – Jun 2021).....	100
List of Figures and Tables	101

1. Introduction

This self-assessment report has been prepared as part of the HAHE's application for membership renewal in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and registration in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). It is structured in accordance with Annex I in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews (2016) and constitutes the result of team working, staff and Council interaction, meetings with foreign experts, stakeholder consultation and reflection.

The report has taken into account all quality assurance activities conducted by the HAHE (and its predecessor HQA from 2015 to 2020), a turbulent period for the Greek higher education marked by continuous reforms and of course the disruption of COVID 19. It is based on laws, stakeholder feedback, and quality assurance activities, documentation and results and presents improvements and progress made by the Authority after the previous review.

The drafting of the self-assessment report has been an experience of utmost importance for delineating HAHE's future strategic directions/alternatives, which reassure its allegiance to its role for reinforcing quality culture in all areas of the Greek higher education system, based on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

This report is submitted to the ENQA Review Panel for the Authority's external evaluation, which HAHE considers a unique opportunity for improving its services and carrying out its mission even more effectively, thus empowering further higher education institutions in their pursuit of excellence.

2. Development of the self-assessment report

The self-assessment report is a product of the collective endeavour of a HAHE working group, which was appointed by the HAHE's Supreme Council. The preparation of the self-assessment report lasted 8 weeks (4 weeks in June, 3 weeks in July and 1 week in September, 2021). This working group¹ was coordinated by the Director General of the Authority, Dr. Christina Besta. The timeline of the SAR preparation appears in Annex I. During the preparation of the report, the HAHE staff had the opportunity for wide engagement and contribution in multiple areas. The Supreme Council of the Authority had the responsibility to review the first draft of the report and embellish certain sections with comments and pertinent information. In addition, council members have provided their opinion and constructive reviews. Stakeholders provided feedback in distinct sections of the report (please see section 11 of the report).

The sources of the information included herein consist of:

- Previous HAHE/HQA annual activities' reports
- Previous HAHE (HQA) external evaluation by ENQA
- HAHE/HQA Quality Manual
- HAHE Quality Assurance Documentation
- National legislation
- Questionnaire data with reference to HEIs
- Evaluation and accreditation reports
- Data from self-assessment of HEIs Data from the EU and international environment
- Ministerial opinions
- Opinions from researchers and trade unions / chambers of commerce
- Feedback from student representatives
- Feedback from rectorate conference, expert representatives from business, evaluation and accreditation panel members

¹ The working group consisted of Mrs Aikaterini Tsaliki (Head of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Department), Mrs Ioanna Leraki (Quality Assurance and Accreditation Department), Dr Loukas N. Anninos (External Collaborator) and Dr Petros Stavroulakis (External Collaborator). The group prepared the SAR report under the guidelines and coordination of the General Director, Dr Christina Besta.

3. The Greek higher education context and quality assurance

3.1. Brief overview of the Greek Educational System

The Greek educational system comprises three levels: a) Primary, b) Secondary and Post-Secondary and c) Tertiary Education, and operates under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Primary education (HQF level 0-1) includes nursery school (4-6 years) and elementary schools (6-12 years). Secondary education (HQF levels 2-4) is divided into two stages: a) Gymnasium (age 12-15) and b) Lyceum (age 15-18), which may concern a general (General Lyceum) or vocational character (Vocational Lyceum). Post-secondary education (HQF level 4) includes Vocational Upper Secondary Schools, Vocational Training Institutes, and Colleges. Tertiary education (HQF levels 5-8) includes post-secondary non-university and higher education institutions. The latter (through their Vocational Education Centres) are eligible to offer two-year vocational training programmes (that correspond to HQF level 5) for graduates of Vocational Upper Secondary Schools. Level 5 studies were established in 2017 by Law 4485/2017. This legal provision was later abolished. Level 5 programmes are offered outside the higher education sector.

3.2. The Context of Higher Education in Greece

Education, in general, is a main priority for the Greek State. Based on article 16 of the Greek Constitution, higher education is provided only by public institutions (under the supervision of and financing by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs) that enjoy full autonomy and academic freedom. According to Law 4485/2017, higher education comprises two distinctive sectors: a) the university sector that includes Universities, Technical Universities, and the Athens School of Fine Arts and b) the technological sector that includes Technological Education Institutions (TEIs) and the School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (ASPETE). Overall, and based on recent developments (mergers) regarding the restructuring of the Greek higher education system (Laws 4521/2018, 4559/2018, 4589/2019 and 4610/2019), Greece has 24 Universities and 1 TEI.



Figure 1: The Greek higher education in 2020

It is worth noting that 11 out of 25 higher education institutions changed their structure as a result of merging with former Technological Education Institutions (see Table 1 and section 3.7). This was a political decision taken by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs without consultation with the Authority (as it should) or evidence (feasibility studies, predefined criteria) covering the requirements for a successful merger in the field of higher education. It has to be pointed out that all new study programmes that were established at that time (in 2018 and 2019) are in the process of quality accreditation (in 2022). Moreover, the new legal framework that regulates the operation of the HAHE allows the Authority to have a consulting role in the formulation of higher education strategy, which includes the structure of the Greek map of higher education.

Table 1: Universities with changes in their academic structure

HEI	Merged TEIs	Law
University of West Attica	TEI of Athens & TEI of Piraeus	4521/2018
Ionian University	TEI of Ionian Islands	4559/2018
University of Ioannina	TEI of Epirus	4559/2018
University of Thessaly	TEI of Thessaly & TEI of Western Greece	4589/2019
Agricultural University of Athens	TEI of Western Greece	4589/2019
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens	TEI of Central Greece	4589/2019
International Hellenic University	ATEI of Thessaloniki, TEI of Eastern Macedonia & Thrace TEI of Central Macedonia	4610/2019
Hellenic Mediterranean University	TEI of Crete	4610/2019
University of Western Macedonia	TEI of Western Macedonia	4610/2019
University of Peloponnese	TEI of Western Greece & TEI of Peloponnese	4610/2019
University of Patras	TEI of Western Greece	4610/2019

The 25 HEIs consist of 422 departments (147 of which are new offering new undergraduate study programmes, while 37 have been suspended under Law 4653/2020) and 430 undergraduate study programmes. By June 2020, there were 69 undergraduate study programmes leading to the award of an integrated master's degree (article 46, Law 4485/2017).

In order to carry out their mission, higher education institutions are organized and operate based on common rules and practices which assure: a) freedom in research and teaching, b) research and scientific deontology, c) quality in education, d) quality in service provision, effectiveness and efficiency in managing resources, e) transparency in their activities, f) impartiality of their administrative bodies in work execution and decision making, g) meritocracy in staff selection and development, h) equal treatment of the sexes and respect for diversity.

The Greek higher education institutions are state-funded by the national budget and the public investment programme for higher education. Nevertheless, a significant amount of the universities' operational requirements is met by other sources (such as funding from the Special Account for Research Funds², tuition fees for postgraduate programmes, provision of laboratory and clinics services, donations, sponsorships, and the Engineers and Public Contractors Pension Fund [TSMED]).

² The sources of research funding include grants and contracts from external sources. These funds, covering research, educational activities and services, are managed through an office known as the Special Account for Research Funds (established in all Greek HEIs).

3.3. Study Levels

The study programmes offered by the HEIs are divided into three cycles:

(A) First cycle (HQF Level 6) — Undergraduate (requiring 4, 5, or 6 years of study, depending on the subject); the duration of the undergraduate degree programmes for most disciplines is 4 years but there are programmes in engineering, dentistry, pharmacology, agronomics, forestry, and fine arts, with a duration of 5 years, and medicine with a duration of 6 years.

(B) Second cycle (HQF Level 7) – Postgraduate/Master studies (1,5 to 2 years); Postgraduate studies offer students the possibility of specialization in certain fields. The postgraduate study programmes are available to Greek or foreign graduates of Greek Universities, or equivalent institutions from abroad. The admission requirements, the criteria of selection taken into account, the tuition fees, and the procedure of admission processes are determined by the internal regulations of each postgraduate programme. Usually the candidates are chosen on the basis of a dedicated selection process or their examination results.

Postgraduate programmes are usually offered in Greek, but an increasing number of these is currently offered in English (and in some cases they are jointly organized with foreign universities)³. At the end of their studies, students must prepare and defend their master thesis (viva).

According to Law 4485/2017 (article 46), the successful completion of the first cycle in university departments that lasts at least 10 academic semesters required for a degree, will lead to the award of an integrated master's degree in the specialization of the relevant department, under specific preconditions (e.g. master thesis).

(C) Third cycle (HQF Level 8) — Doctoral studies (at least 3 years). Doctoral Studies are offered by higher education institutions of the University sector only and they lead to the award of a Doctorate (PhD). The general goal of doctoral studies is high-level specialization in a specific area of knowledge and the promotion of fundamental research in various scientific fields with a focus on strengthening the country's scientific base. In the case of Universities that offer postgraduate courses, it is essential to have a Post-graduate Diploma in order to obtain a Doctorate. Permission to prepare a doctoral dissertation at Universities that do not offer regular post-graduate courses is granted to applicants who meet certain prerequisites. The Departments themselves draft and implement the admission requirements.

3.4. Academic Year

The academic year commences on the 1st of September each year and ends on the 31st of August of the following year. Each academic year includes educational activities that correspond to 60 ECTS credits. The academic year in Greece is divided into two semesters:

1. The winter semester (usually October to mid-January).
2. The spring semester (usually mid-February to the beginning of June).

³ The legal framework in the Greek higher education allows and encourages the organization of postgraduate programmes in cooperation with foreign institutions. The HAHE is also responsible for quality assurance of these programmes. However, the suitable standard for the accreditation of postgraduate programmes (joint programmes) is under development as the accreditation process of all (more than 1000 programmes) has not commenced yet. The accreditation of postgraduate programmes has been scheduled for 2022.

It is also noted that the legal framework for higher education does not allow the independent operation of foreign higher education institutions in Greece, hence their quality accreditation is not among the HAHE's responsibilities.

Every semester includes at least 13 weeks of teaching. The end of each semester marks the beginning of the exam period. Students may be reassessed in the modules of both semesters before the beginning of the winter semester (September exam period). Throughout the year, there is a total of 4 weeks of Christmas and Easter holidays.

3.5. Fees

There are no fees for attending undergraduate higher education with the exception of the Hellenic Open University (HOU), which offers distance and/or blended learning education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels⁴.

There are postgraduate programmes which have no fees. However, in the case of postgraduate programmes in which students are required to pay fees, the amount is determined by each programme individually.

According to Law 4485/2017, higher education institutions provide access to the second cycle of studies for students who meet the academic requirements for admission, regardless of their economic conditions. Exemption from tuition fees is applicable in the case of graduate students whose a) individual income (if any) does not exceed 100% and b) equivalized family disposable income does not exceed 70%, of the national median equivalized disposable income, according to the most recent data published by ELSTAT. This exemption is granted for participation in only one Master's programme. In any case, exempt students should not exceed 30% of the total number of students who are admitted to the Master's programme. If eligible students for exemption exceed the aforementioned percentage, their selection is based on ranking, starting with those having the lowest income.

Lastly, there are in force Institutional award scholarships to students based on academic criteria, as specified in their respective Master Programmes' regulations.

3.6. Advisory bodies

Academic Councils of Higher Education and Research (ASAEE)

In accordance with the provisions of Law 4485/2017, a Higher Education Academic Council (ASAEE) is established in every region of the country. The Higher Education Academic Councils consist of 19 members (16 faculty members of HEIs in the region (appointed by the Senate) or foreign universities and researchers of research centers (elected) in the region concerned, 1 member suggested by the National Council for Research and Innovation, 1 member appointed by decision of the Minister of Finance and Development and 1 member appointed by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs). Among the Council's responsibilities are a) the development of strategic proposals for the development of higher education institutions and research centres/institutes on a regional level, b) the recommendations to HEI and research centres-institutes regarding the processes, means, and sources for their development and funding of researchers and graduates, and c) the submission of a progress report to the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs regarding the degree that institutions and research centres of the region have implemented their strategic plan with the aim to help the supervisory role of the State.

Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE)

As part of its mission, the Authority contributes in the formulation and implementation of the national strategy for higher education and the allocation of funding to higher education institutions. In addition, it is responsible for evaluating and accrediting the quality of all higher education institutions operating in the country (currently 24 universities and 1 Technological Education Institution) Law 4653/2020).

⁴ Distance and/or blended programmes differ from traditional study programmes. Quality accreditation of these programmes will be based on specialised criteria which will be identified in due course.

National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP)

EOPPEP is the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance, an all-encompassing statutory body investing on better quality and more efficient and reliable lifelong learning services in Greece. EOPPEP develops and implements comprehensive national systems for the accreditation of non-formal and informal learning and provides scientific and technical support in designing and implementing the vocational guidance national policy, as well as the provision of such services in Greece. EOPPEP is also the statutory body for the development and implementation of the Hellenic Qualifications Framework (HQF) in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The eight levels of the Hellenic Qualification Framework cover the full qualification range between Primary and Higher education. Each level includes a set of skills, competences, and knowledge that determines the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes constitute the qualifications of each corresponding level. The Hellenic Qualifications Framework⁵ is presented below:

Table 2: The Hellenic Qualifications Framework

Hellenic Qualifications Framework Level	Certificate & Other Qualifications
1	Primary School Certificate
2	Lower Secondary School Certificate
3	Level 1 Vocational Training Certificate
	Level 3 Vocational Training School (SEK) Specialty Certificate, Awarded To Vocational Training School (SEK) Graduates
4	Level 4 General Upper Secondary School Certificate, Awarded To General <i>Lykeio</i> (GEL) Graduates
	Level 4 Vocational Upper Secondary School (EPAL) Certificate (Equivalent To Gel Certificate), Awarded To Vocational <i>Lykeio</i> (EPAL) Grade 3 Graduates Upon In-School Examinations
	Level 4 Vocational Upper Secondary School (EPAL) Degree, Awarded To Vocational <i>Lykeio</i> (EPAL) Grade 3 Graduates Upon In-School Examinations
	Vocational School (EPAS) Certificate
5	Level-5 Vocational Training Diploma, Initial Vocational Training
	Level-5 Vocational Upper Secondary School Degree, Awarded To EPAL Apprenticeship Class Graduates
	Post-Secondary and Non-Higher Education Degree
6	Higher Education (Bachelor) Degree
7	Master's Degree
8	Doctorate

Furthermore, other extra-legislation bodies that undertake advisory roles include:

The Hellenic Universities Rectors' Synod (Conference)

This is a non-legislated body, established in 1987, that started to operate as a forum for exchanging views and ideas between the heads of the Universities. From 1990 onwards, the Synod (Conference) has obtained a composite character and a permanent Secretariat, and started to broaden its spectrum of initiatives. As a result, the Synod today plays a significant role in the area of University Education. The members of the Synod are the Rectors and Vice-Rectors of all Hellenic Universities (http://www.synodos-aei.gr/index_en.html).

The Synod's remit is to coordinate the Universities' activity, and act as their delegate in order to achieve, among other things, the following goals:

⁵ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-qualifications-framework-33_en

- to form views on various key educational and research issues concerning (especially) Universities;
- to elaborate initiatives aiming at achieving an effective association between Universities and their social, cultural, and economic environment;
- to contribute to governmental planning and its measures of educational and research policy;
- to promote university community views;
- to develop associations with equivalent international unions and
- to promote the aspirations and consolidate the interests of the Greek university community members.

The Hellenic Federation of University Teachers' Association (POSDEP)

The Hellenic Federation of University Teachers' Association (POSDEP) is the Union body of academic and research staff (DEP) of Greek Universities. Its primary objectives are the following (<http://www.posdep.gr/>):

- To promote the democratization and autonomy of higher education establishments.
- To study and contribute in solving the problems that arise in the sector of higher education.
- The improvement of the level of studies and research carried out at Universities, and their orientation towards responding to the needs of the scientific, technological, economic, and cultural developments of the country.
- Linking Universities with their social environment, so that they can contribute in the study and solution of the problems of each region.
- The standardization of objectives and coordination of activities of the association members aiming at:
 - (a) Ensuring and promoting the scientific work of its members, as well as seeking to resolve all issues related to their scientific development;
 - (b) Promoting wage and pension demands and, generally, improving the working conditions of its members.
- Defending the University asylum and academic freedoms.
- Providing active and responsible support on facing important national social problems.

3.7. Legislation – Developments

In 2017, the Law 4485/2017 “Organisation and operation of higher education, regulations on research and other provisions” has been considered as an integrated institutional intervention in the organization of Higher Education Institutions. Based on this law:

- HEIs may organize two-year vocational education programmes for Vocational Upper Secondary School (EPAL) graduates. These programmes provide Level 5 Diplomas (Hellenic and European Qualifications Framework).
- Innovative processes are introduced, that aim at the improvement of academic performance, the full development of HEIs strategic role, and a closer link between education and research. Hence, the collaboration of HEIs and Research Centres is enhanced to promote the development of a single area of higher education and research at the prefectural level. Within this framework, regional Academic Councils of Higher Education and Research (ASAE) are established.
- Regulations are promoted regarding the autonomous administration of HEIs on daily operational issues, along with measures that promote administrative flexibility and optimal use of available resources. A Special Account of Research Funding (ELKE) is established and operates in every HEI, in order to manage and deploy funds for scientific research, education, training, technological development, and innovation.
- Regulations are included that refer to the streamlining of the operation of postgraduate programmes (Master's Courses and PhDs), greater transparency in the management of Master's funds, guarantee of free access.

In 2018, the University of West Attica was founded from the merger of two Technological Institutes (TEI of Athens and TEI of Piraeus) of the country (Law 4521/2018). On the basis of the policy of the Unified Higher Education Area and the future re-mapping of Higher Education, Law 4559/2018 "University of Ioannina, Ionian University and other regulations", foresees legislative interventions, which aim at the co-operation of Institutions. These co-operations include:

- The merger of the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of Epirus with the University of Ioannina. New departments and schools were founded at the University of Ioannina.
- The merger of the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) of the Ionian Islands with the Ionian University. New departments and schools were founded at the Ionian University.

In 2019, the Minister of Education, Research, and Religious Affairs signed the decisions regarding the eligibility of HEIs to the provisions of Law 4485/2017. The latter states that the successful completion of first cycle studies (5 years) leads to the acquisition of a single and uniform postgraduate degree (integrated masters) in the specialisation of the relevant department.

In addition, the policy of streamlining and redeployment of the architecture in higher education continues, following the establishment of the University of West Attica, the Ionian University, and the University of Ioannina. Law 4589/2019 concerns the mergers of three important universities and two of the largest technological education institutes:

1. The University of Thessaly
2. The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
3. The Agricultural University of Athens
4. The University of Applied Sciences (TEI) of Thessaly
5. The Technological Education Institute (TEI) of Central Greece

Finally, Law 4610/2019 regulates (among other higher education issues):

1. The merger of the Technological Educational Institute of Central Macedonia, the Technological Educational Institute of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, and the Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki with the International Hellenic University,
2. The merger of the Technological Educational Institute of Western Macedonia with the University of Western Macedonia,
3. The integration of the Technological Educational Institute of Western Greece to the University of Patras and the University of the Peloponnese,
4. The merger of the Technological Educational Institute of the Peloponnese with the University of the Peloponnese and,
5. The establishment of the Hellenic Mediterranean University (former Technological Educational Institute of Crete).

The next legal milestone in higher education has been Law 4653/2020 according to which the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency was renamed to Hellenic Authority for Higher Education. This Law regulates the structure and organization of the new actor, its new responsibilities for the effective operation and quality assurance of higher education, such as the national strategy for higher education, the planning agreements among institutions and the Ministry of Higher Education, the thematic evaluation of HEIs, the allocation of public funding to HEIs (and the implementation of performance-based funding) and the establishment/designation of Centres of Excellence.

Finally, Law 4777/2021 regulated issues for admission in higher education, the protection of academic freedom and enhancement of academic environment as well as disciplinary issues.

3.8. Access

Access to the first cycle of Greek higher education (level 6) presupposes a Secondary School Certificate (Lyceum Certificate)⁶ and participation in the Panhellenic Examinations. According to Law 4610/2019 all institutions' departments are divided into 4 disciplinary fields, namely: a) humanities, law, and social sciences, b) science and technology, c) health and life sciences and d) economics and computer science. Students may enrol in only one field. Each field includes 4 courses in which students are required to be examined. The average exam grade achieved in the four courses (specified by each of the 4 disciplinary fields) accounts for 90% of their score for higher education admission while the grade point average of the Lyceum Certificate accounts for 10%. For the academic year of 2020-2021, only the average exam grade achieved in the four courses is required. In addition, in those cases of departments in which examination in an additional specific course or practical test is required, this examination is nationwide, as well. If a candidate has achieved a score that allows admission in one or more departments, he/she is only admitted at the department on the basis of his/her preferences as specified in his/her electronic application-entry form.

The number of admitted students per study programme is determined centrally by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, a fact which constitutes a significant weakness of the Greek higher education system. Usually there are more students admitted per study programme than the number of available positions. This impacts negatively on the quality of students' learning experience.

There is a different admissions' procedure only at the Hellenic Open University.

Access to the second higher education cycle requires a Ptyhion/Diploma (first cycle degree) and other necessary qualifications that are determined by each individual programme. Respectively, a master's degree is a prerequisite for pursuing doctoral studies. Admissions to the third study cycle are also regulated by each department/school.

3.9. A recent snapshot of the Greek Higher Education performance

During 2019, Greece has continued to increase the proportion of higher education graduates in its population, while at the same time offering the latter reduced employment prospects and relatively low earnings, as compared to EU and OECD countries. In addition, several quality issues persist, such as a high student-to-staff ratio, low graduation rates, low public funding, and low teaching staff renewal ratios. In terms of these indicators, the country's position is unfavorable, also due to the high percentage of inactive⁷ students in the student population. However, Greece still maintains a good track record in research, at least concerning its output level (papers published), while there is considerable room for improvement with respect to the impact of this research (citations). During 2018 and 2019, Greece proceeded in restructuring its map of higher education by launching mergers of Higher Education Institutions and Technologies Educational Institutes.

The implementation of quality assurance in previous years has led to specific improvements in HEIs, recorded in 2018, 2019 and 2020, both in the form of results achieved in Institutional monitoring reports and in the process of accreditation by independent experts. Improvements have been made to the structure and updating of curricula and the use of digital tools in the educational process. There remain, however, significant weaknesses: inadequate staffing of the Institutional Quality Assurance Units, partial and/or incomplete implementation of quality assurance across the range of academic and administrative functions, as well as inadequate management information systems, limited capacity and efficiency in setting and implementing objectives, low participation of students and external stakeholders in quality assurance, and the scarce application of student-centered learning.

⁶ The Secondary School Certificate is awarded to students who successfully complete secondary education.

⁷ Inactive students are students who have exceeded the duration of their studies for more than 2 years as it is stated in the relevant Law.

In 2020 as well as in the previous two years, the Authority implemented all the required actions for organizing and coordinating accreditations, it increased the provision of Institutional support services, and further developed its internal organization, even though it operated at a third of the required human and financial resources.

It is also worth mentioning that 7 Greek universities participate in the European Universities initiative, namely the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (CIVIS), the Agricultural University of Athens (CONEXUS), the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (EPICUR), the Hellenic Mediterranean University (ATHENA), the Technical University of Crete (EURECA-PRO), the University of the Aegean (ERUA) and the University of Thessaly (INVEST).



Figure 2: The Greek educational system & a snapshot of Greek HE performance

3.10. Quality Assurance in the Greek Higher Education Sector

3.10.1. Establishment of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Quality assurance in higher education was established for the first time by Law 3374/2005, whereby a single, nationwide ongoing evaluation process has been set up, aimed at stock-taking, analysing, and systematically assessing teaching and research work, study programmes and other services of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The same Law established the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (HQA) as the responsible body for quality assurance in higher education. It should be noted that even before the establishment of the HQA, several Greek higher education institutions and study programmes had been evaluated during the 90s. This was possible either through the external evaluations of European University Association (EUA) or through special programmes supported by European funds.

With Law 4009/2011 “Structure, function, quality assurance for studies and internationalization of Higher Education Institutes”, Greece acquired a national accreditation system that supported HEIs, so that they can develop stable programmes of growing academic and professional quality. Accreditation is a process of external evaluation on the basis of, on the one hand, particular, predetermined, internationally acceptable quantitative and qualitative criteria, which are published in advance, and on the other, on the basis of indicators streamlined with the Principles and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of the European Area of Higher Education (ESG 2015). Its field of implementation is the Internal Quality Assurance System of institutions and (existing and new) programmes of the first, second and third study cycle.

The new legal framework that underpins the operation of the HAHE (Law4653/2020) refers to a) the thematic evaluation of higher education institutions as well, which consists of a systematic, substantiated, and detailed assessment, promotion and listing of the work done by higher education institutions or their academic units through the use of objective criteria, as well as in the critical analysis and identification of any existing weaknesses and deviations from their academic character, objectives and mission and b) the designation of Centres of Excellence, namely academic units characterized by exceptional quality in teaching and research in accordance with specific criteria.

3.10.2. Structure of the system of QA bodies in Greek Higher Education

The Greek quality assurance system for higher education has two pillars: the Quality Assurance Units which operate inside universities and the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education. More specifically:

Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP)

1. Each institution is responsible for ensuring and continually improving the quality of its teaching and research work, as well as for the effective operation and performance of its services in accordance with international practices, especially those of the European Higher Education Area, and the principles and guidelines of HAHE.
2. The Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of each HEI is responsible for ensuring the above. The Unit is constituted upon a decision of the Council of the Institution and consists of the rector or one of his/her deputies, as president, five professors of the university, one representative of each category of staff, with voting rights when issues relating to the category of staff are discussed, a representative of the undergraduate students, and a representative of the postgraduate and doctoral candidates, if available, as members, as specifically defined by the Institution.

The QAU is responsible, in particular, for:

- a) The development of policy, strategy, and the necessary procedures for the continuous improvement in the quality of the Institution's work and services, which constitutes the Institution's Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS).
- b) The organization, operation, and continuous improvement of the IQAS.
- c) The coordination and procedural support for the evaluation of the Institute's academic units and other services.
- d) The support for the procedures of external evaluation and accreditation of study programmes and the Institution's internal quality assurance system, in accordance with the principles, standards and guidelines of HAHE.

The Institution's Internal Quality Assurance System and the procedures for its implementation are defined by a decision of the Council, issued on a proposal of the rector and published in the Government Gazette, as well as the website of the institution. These are revised at least every six years. For the above purposes, the QAU collaborates with HAHE, it develops an electronic system for the management of the evaluation data, and is responsible for its systematic monitoring and for publishing information on its evaluation procedures and their results, on its website. The Institution's Internal Regulations define the organization and operations of the QAU, as well as its more specific responsibilities.

Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE)

The next section concerns the presentation of HAHE, inclusive of its strategy, objectives, and activities.

3.10.3. The Authority

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) is an independent administrative authority and its mission is to ensure high quality in Higher Education. It was established by Law 4653/2020 and is the continuation of the Hellenic Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (HQA), which was established and has been operating since 2006. The Authority is managed by its President and Supreme Council. It has administrative autonomy and is supervised by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, who exercises oversight control of legality.

3.10.3.1. Mission

The HAHE, in the context of its mission: a) contributes in the formation and implementation of the national strategy for higher education and the distribution of financing for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and b) evaluates and accredits the operational quality of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The Authority guarantees the transparency of all its actions; the latter are made public through its official website.

To fulfil its mission, the HAHE maintains an integrated information system for the extraction and management of higher education data, and cooperates with international networks and agencies that are active in any domain related to its mission. The HAHE is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2015 and of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) since 2014.

3.10.3.2. The Structure of the HAHE

The HAHE is organized as follows:

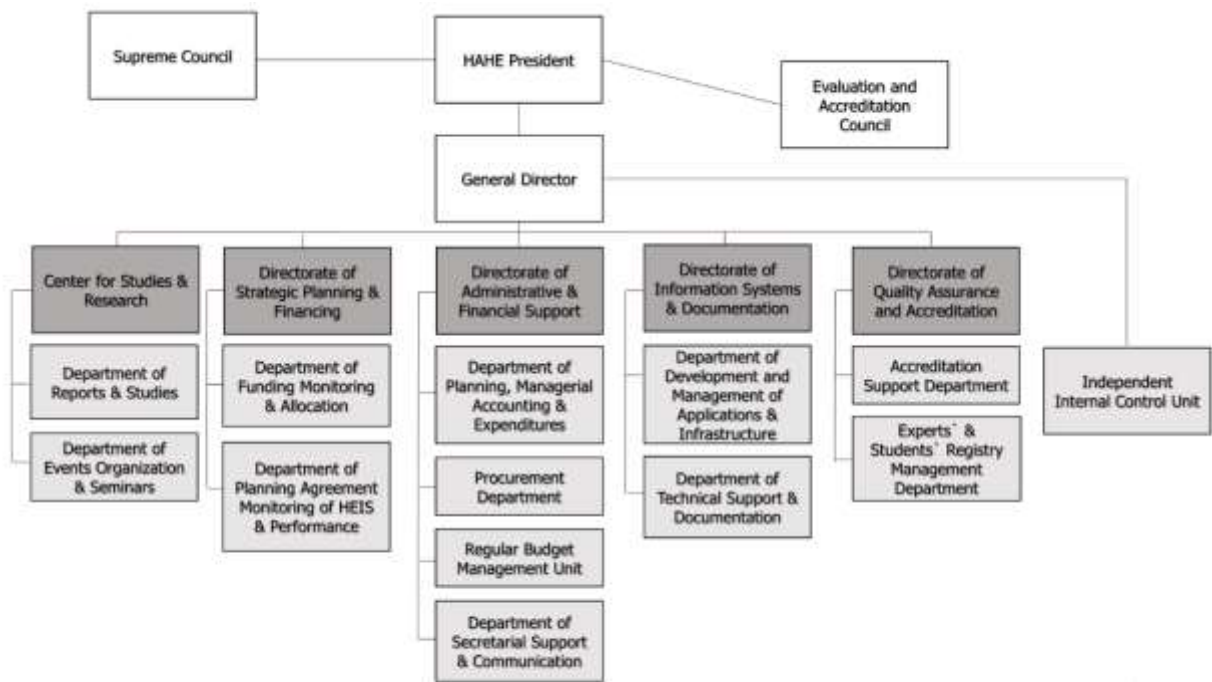


Figure 3: HAHE Organization Chart

3.10.3.3. The President

The President of the HAHE supervises its operation and achievement of its goals. More specifically, the President:

- (a) Represents the HAHE in and out of court.
- (b) Convenes and chairs the Supreme Council and E&A Council meetings.
- (c) Prepares the agenda for the Supreme Council and E&A Council meetings.
- (d) Supervises the progress made in implementing the decisions and overall work of the Authority.
- (e) Is responsible for the procedures carried out to select the Supreme Council and E&A Council members.
- (f) Appoints the Supreme Council and E&A Council members, as well as the General Director and other staff of the HAHE.

3.10.3.4. The Supreme Council

According to Article 3 of Law 4653/2020, the highest administrative body of the Authority is the Supreme Council (SC), composed of 5 members, i.e. the President, Vice-President and three members, i.e. active/retired professors from Greek higher education institutions or active/retired professors from foreign higher education institutions.

The President shall be appointed by decision of the Council of Ministers, following a proposal from the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs, with consent from the Special Permanent Committee on Institutions and Transparency of the Hellenic Parliament.

The Vice-President shall be selected from among the members of the Supreme Council by vote during its kick-off meeting.

The President of the HAHE shall, within fifteen days from the date of his/her appointment, launch an open public tender to fill the posts of members of the Authority's Supreme Council. The President shall set up a three-member committee for the evaluation of candidates. The committee shall comprise the President and two active/retired full professors from Greek higher education institutions or active/retired professors from foreign higher education institutions, who shall draw up an evaluation list for the candidates who have the formal and pertinent qualifications on the basis of their scientific, research, and teaching background. In classifying the candidates, attention shall also be directed towards their respective experience in the management of higher education institutions and in quality assurance. The President shall forward the candidates of the evaluation list to the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs and to the rectors of the higher educational institutions. If three quarters of the rectors object to a specific candidate within five days from the date of notification, said candidate shall be deleted from the classification list and replaced by the following candidate in the list. The Minister for Education and Religious Affairs shall, as per the final classification list, appoint the four members of the Supreme Council by a decision to be published in the Hellenic Government Gazette.

The meetings of the Supreme Council shall be attended by the General Director of HAHE on a no-vote basis. Other persons may also be invited to attend the meetings on a no-vote basis, such as:

- (i) employees irrespective of rank and high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs;
- (ii) representatives of the governing bodies of Greek higher education institutions;
- (iii) directors of research centres operated by higher education institutions;
- (iv) social partner representatives; and
- (v) student representatives.

The President and Vice-President of the Supreme Council shall serve a four-year term in office, whereas the members shall serve a five-year term in office. The President, Vice-President and members of the Supreme Council may not be appointed for more than two terms of office, whether consecutive or not.

The President and the Members of the Supreme and the Evaluation and Accreditation Council shall enjoy personal and functional independence during the performance of their duties.

3.10.3.5. The Evaluation and Accreditation Council

The Evaluation and Accreditation Council (E&A Council) is composed of:

(a) the President of the Supreme Council, as Chairman. The Vice-President of the EAC shall be selected from among its members by vote during its kick-off meeting

(b) eight members from the teaching and research staff of higher education institutions, who are experts in the following disciplines:

- a. Humanities or fine arts,
- b. Law or political sciences,
- c. Economics or social sciences,
- d. Health sciences or biology,
- e. Environmental, agri-food or geotechnical sciences,
- f. Engineering,
- g. Physical sciences, mathematics

(c) a student representative selected by the Supreme Council by vote among the students included in the Registry of Students kept and updated by the Authority.

(d) a representative of the Technical Chamber of Greece, the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, and the Economic Chamber of Greece, as proposed by these chambers.

The members of the EAC shall be active/retired full professors from Greek higher education institutions or active/retired professors from foreign higher education institutions. To select the EAC members, the President of HAHE shall launch a public tender in order to fill in the respective posts and set up a three-member selection committee consisting of the President of the Authority and two outsiders as members, for each discipline, i.e. active/retired full professors from Greek higher education institutions or active/retired professors from foreign higher education institutions. The committee shall draw up an evaluation list for the candidates who have the formal and substantive qualifications based on their scientific, research, and teaching background. In classifying the candidates, attention shall also be directed towards their experience in quality assurance and accreditation in higher education, as evidenced by their participation in evaluation committees and collective bodies responsible for quality assurance in higher education institutions and their relevant scientific and research background. The President shall notify the candidate evaluation list to the rectors of the higher educational institutions. If three quarters of the rectors object to a specific candidate within five days from the date of notification, that candidate shall be deleted from the classification list and replaced by the following candidate in the list. The EAC shall hold its kick-off meeting within fifteen days from the date of publication of the decision on the appointment of its members in the Hellenic Government Gazette. In the event that a student fails to participate, or that the Technical Chamber of Greece, the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece and the Economic Chamber of Greece fail to propose a joint representative, the quorum of EAC meetings, which is necessary for establishing its lawful setup and adopting decisions on any agenda item, shall be calculated on the basis of the rest of its appointed members.

The President and Vice-President shall serve a four-year term of office, whereas the members shall serve a six-year term of office, except for the undergraduate student who shall serve one-year term. The President, Vice-President, and members of the EAC may not be appointed for more than two terms of office, whether consecutive or not.

3.10.3.6. The General Director and the Scientific and Administrative Service

The HAHE is supported in its operations by an administrative and scientific service, which is headed by the General Director (appointed by HAHE for 4 years, after public notice of the position and evaluation of candidates by a three-member committee appointed by the Council from among its members, following the recommendation of the President).

The **General Director** is responsible for the administration and operation of the Authority and shall exercise, in particular, the following powers:

- a. attend the meetings of the Supreme Council and of the E&A Council on a no-vote basis,
- b. coordinate and direct the scientific service and the administrative service and their units,
- c. be responsible for implementing the decisions, guidelines, and any other acts of the HAHE,
- d. confer the powers of signature on the HAHE staff members and authorise them to sign documents or other acts “by order of the General Director,”
- e. serve as the authorizing officer in respect of the HAHE’s expenses, and
- f. carry out such additional and more specific functions as laid down in the HAHE’s rules of procedure.

According to the Law 4653/2020, the administrative service of the Authority is structured into the following service units:

- a. Directorate for Quality Assurance and Accreditation

- b. Directorate for Strategic Planning and Financing
- c. Directorate for Information Systems and Documentation, and
- d. Directorate for Administrative & Financial Support.

The responsibilities of the Directorates, their further division into departments and categories and the fields or specialties of their supervisors are determined in the Authority's Manual of Operations.

The Studies and Research Centre shall serve as the scientific service of the HAHE, which shall function as a directorate.

Thus, currently HAHE consists of 5 Directorates, 12 Departments and 1 Independent Unit. An overview of the responsibilities of each Directorate/Department is presented below.

Centre for Studies and Research

The Centre for Studies and Research collects data, maintains databases, conducts research, carries out studies, publishes reports and organizes events and scientific meetings and international conferences on issues related to the mission of the Authority.

Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation

The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Directorate is responsible for a) planning, coordinating and organizing of external evaluation and accreditation of IQAS and study programs, b) maintaining and regular updating of the Registry of independent experts for the implementation of the aforementioned external evaluation and accreditation procedures.

Directorate of Strategic Planning and Financing

The Directorate oversees the implementation of HEIs' planning agreements. More specifically, it undertakes the negotiation, recommendation and monitoring of the planning agreements of HEIs with the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and the allocation of public funding to them. However, for reasons beyond the Authority, this Directorate has not been active for some time, as the relevant provisions (Articles 62 & 73) of the previous Law (4009/11) that regulated the operation of the HAHE had not been effectively implemented.

Directorate of Information Systems and Documentation

The Information Systems and Documentation Directorate tasks include monitoring the Authority's information systems and their security (NISQA, Registry of Experts, E-mail, website, backup data storage systems, telecommunications systems, electronic protocol, accounting software, file storage and handling systems), updating of data backups, supporting users, supporting the Council's videoconferences, developing and exporting data base reports, implementing digital policy in the public sector (E-government initiative).

Directorate of Administrative & Financial Support Directorate

The responsibilities of the Administrative Support Directorate include financial and administrative management, support of the Councils' meetings, the management of the protocol and correspondence, communication with external and national agencies, ensuring Service Quality through compliance with the principles of ISO 9001: 2015.

3.10.4. Higher Education responsibilities

1. National Strategy and Planning agreements

The Supreme Council of the HAHE recommends the national higher education strategy to the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs. The national higher education strategy:

- (a) is approved by the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs every four years,
- (b) lays down mid-term targets, guidelines, investment plans, programs, or individual actions for the national higher education policy, and
- (c) is further specified on an annual basis, covering all actions for the implementation of the national higher education policy.

The national higher education strategy is implemented through the HEIs, which prepare a four-year development program and implement the relevant actions in the context of the planning agreements referred to below.

The planning agreements entered into force by and between each higher education institution and the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs are drawn up in the context of each institution's respective strategic planning and the national higher education strategy and shall be further specified on an annual basis, covering the following topics:

- (i) the character and mission of the higher education institution, its position in Greece and globally, the objectives of the higher education institution and of its academic units, on a ranked and prioritised basis,
- (ii) the determination, planning, and measures for the development and support of the education and research activities and objectives of the higher education institution,
- (iii) the development of infrastructure and equipment,
- (iv) the improvement of the services rendered,
- (v) the coordination of the academic, education, and research activities of the higher education institution with the corresponding developments in foreign institutions, (in particular) the developments and prospects in the European Higher Education and Research Area.

Regarding financial issues, the institutional contracts lay down more specific details on the following matters for each higher education institution:

- (a) operating expenses,
- (b) investment, and
- (c) staff in each category.

The above contracts are implemented on an annual basis.

The higher education institution's recommendation on the planning agreement are submitted by the rector to the Supreme Council of the HAHE by the end of January of the year prior to that in which the following planning agreement is to enter into force. Following negotiations between the Supreme Council of HAHE and the higher education institution, taking into account the national higher education strategy and the institution's compliance with the results of the evaluation and accreditation procedure, in accordance with the more specific provisions herein, the contracts shall be approved by the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs following a recommendation from the Supreme Council of the HAHE and shall be signed by the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs and the rector of the higher education institution and published in the Hellenic Government Gazette. The HAHE's opinion covers the topics (i) to (v) referred to earlier. With respect to financial issues, HAHE only expresses an opinion regarding the allocation of the total public funding for higher education institutions, in accordance with the following article, but not regarding its total amount. The contracting parties shall review the planning agreement and amend accordingly for reasons of public interest whenever this is deemed necessary.

The HAHE, on an annual basis, monitors and evaluates the progress made in relation to the planning agreements entered into force by and between each higher education institution and the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, and makes recommendations to the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs, with reference to pertinent amendments.

The annual report on the implementation of the planning agreements is drawn up and approved by the higher education institution, be posted on its website, and be submitted to the HAHE and the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs by the end of April of the following year, at the latest. The procedure for approval of the report by the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs shall be completed within three months from the date of submission thereof. If the above deadline expires without any action taken, the report shall be deemed to have been approved as submitted.

2. Allocation of public funding to higher education institutions

The funding for higher education institutions from the State budget of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is allocated based on objective criteria and benchmarks, as specified below:

- Eighty per cent (80%) of the regular funding for higher education institutions is allocated on the basis of the following criteria: the total number of students enrolled in each curriculum, the estimated annual cost of education per student in each curriculum, the duration of the curricula, and the size and geographical distribution of the institution.
- Twenty per cent (20%) of the regular funding for higher education institutions concerns the budget of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and it is allocated on the basis of a selection of indicative quality and achievement benchmarks, chosen by each HEI. These benchmarks include:

(i) *the quality and effectiveness of the education*, such as the number of graduates in relation to the number of new enrolments, the evaluation of the education services rendered to students, and the progress made in terms of graduates finding a job;

(ii) *the research activity*, such as the number of members of teaching staff who obtain funding from the European Research Council, the number of Centres of Excellence for research, and the number of members of teaching and research staff holding posts in the central governing bodies of international academic or research organizations or international scientific societies, the number of publications per professor, the number of citations per professor, the number of ordinary participations per professor in international competitive research programs organized by the EU and other international organizations, and the number of coordinator participations per professor in international competitive research programs organized by the EU and other international organizations;

(iii) *internationalization*, such as the number of foreign students in relation to the total number of students enrolled, the number of students attending courses at the institution through European or international education programs, the number of students attending courses abroad through European or international education programs, as well as the number of cooperation agreements with other higher education institutions, in Greece or abroad.

A decision of the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs to be adopted following a recommendation from the Supreme Council of the HAHE and to be published in the Hellenic Government Gazette lays down the quality criteria and the quality and achievement benchmarks referred to above, the method used to weigh and combine them, as well as all relevant procedures.

Should a higher education institution fail to attain the quality and achievement benchmarks which it has selected for its evaluation, the funding lost owing to its evaluation shall be allocated to the rest of the higher education institutions.

The regular funding is allocated to the higher education institutions by decision of the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs to be adopted following a proposal from the Supreme Council of HAHE by January each year.

3.10.5. Quality Assurance responsibilities

The HAHE has currently the following quality assurance responsibilities:

1. The periodic accreditation of Internal Quality Assurance Systems of HEIs and study programmes of all study cycles, including new study programmes, foreign language programmes and lifelong/distance learning programmes. The accreditation of IQAS is a presupposition for the accreditation of study programmes. The accreditation of IQAS and study programmes is granted for a period of 4 years.
2. The thematic evaluation of HEIs and their academic units. It consists of the systematic, substantiated, and detailed assessment, promotion and recording of the work done by higher education institutions or their academic units through the use of objective criteria (the internationalization strategy, gender equality, access for persons with disabilities, graduates finding a job, the environmental footprint of higher education institutions, the assurance of an academic environment, the development of e-learning and lifelong learning programs), as well as in the critical analysis and identification of any existing weaknesses and deviations from their academic character, objectives and mission. Thematic evaluation reports are posted on the Authority's website.
3. The recognition of Centres of Excellence in HEIs: To recognize and support best practices in quality and innovation at institutions of higher education, Centres of Excellence in higher education are established. Universities, faculties, or their schools are elevated to the status of Centres of Excellence by HAHE, following a call for submission of candidacies and an evaluation carried out by special committees whose members are selected at random from the Registry of Experts maintained by the Authority. The criteria for the recognition of Centres of Excellence are namely the exceptional quality and effectiveness of teaching and research work, the efficient structure and organization of study programmes, the linkage between teaching and research, and the high quality of support services. Evaluation criteria for candidacies and, in particular, the procedure for the recognition of Centres of Excellence will be specified by the decision of the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs to be published in the Government Gazette following the recommendation of the Authority's Supreme Council.

Table 3: Quality assurance activities (by year)

Year	Quality assurance activities
2020	IQAS accreditation, SP accreditation, thematic analysis
2019	IQAS accreditation, SP accreditation, thematic analysis
2018	IQAS accreditation, SP accreditation, thematic analysis, external evaluation follow up
2017	Lack of HAHE funding, Preparation of quality accreditation material
2016	External evaluation of HEIs (till July)

The Authority recommends to the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs, and the governing bodies of institutions of higher education, ways and means to ensure continued high quality in higher education.

As part of its strategic planning, HAHE has set the following goals:

- Development of the accreditation process
- Application of internal QA instruments
- Reconciliation of the communication gap with HEI
- Proficiency to function competitively in the international environment
- Organizational development

To fulfil its mission, the Authority establishes, organises, specifies, standardises, and disseminates in advance the relevant processes, criteria and indicators, adhering to the framework of the common principles and guidelines of the European Higher Education Area, whose guidelines have been adapted to the National Quality Assurance System by issuing the Standards for Quality Accreditation of Undergraduate Programmes and the Internal Quality Assurance Systems of Greek institutions of higher education. In addition, the HAHE:

- Develops an integrated management information system and an assessment database, in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Units (QAU) of institutions of higher education;
- Supports the institutions of higher education in the design and implementation of quality assurance and accreditation processes (consultancy is not a specific and a separated activity of the HAHE. It is provided to higher education institutions in the framework of its external quality assurance activities similar to the one ENQA offers to its member agencies);
- Carries out studies and research related to its mission or assigns them to other agencies;
- Draws up, maintains, and updates a Registry of Independent Experts;
- Publishes the evaluation results and informs the state and higher education institutions of the latest international developments in related issues.

3.10.6. Quality assurance results exploitation

The Authority advises on the national strategic plan for higher education and supports its implementation, negotiates programme design agreements with individual institutions, and assesses the progress of its implementation. It also ensures the transparency of the funding criteria and recommends to the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs and the governing bodies of institutions of higher education, ways and means to ensure continued high quality in higher education.

3.10.7. Evaluation and publication of HAHE's work

The Authority carries out an internal assessment of its function and work in accordance with the provisions of its Manual of Operation, and assigns its external evaluation to internationally recognised and accredited evaluators, or bodies, or other organisations engaged in similar activities at international level (agencies registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education that meet the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance).

The reports of the internal (self – evaluation) and external evaluation of the Authority are submitted to its Supreme Council, which then communicates them to the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs and to the Standing Committee on Educational Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament.

The internal and external evaluation (accreditation) reports are taken into account for the preparation of the four-year planning and the corresponding program agreements of the Authority. In case of a positive conditional decision of HAHE accreditation, or a non-accreditation decision, on the initiative of the President of HAHE, improvement actions are planned and implemented to achieve compliance with the criteria that are not met.

In addition, a report on the quality of higher education for the previous year is drawn up by the Authority on an annual basis, which is submitted to the President of the Hellenic Parliament and the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs.

The Authority is a member of a) the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), since 2015, and b) the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), since 2014.

4. History, profile and activities of the Authority

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) was established in 2020 by Law 4653/2020 and constitutes the continuation of the Hellenic Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (HQA) that was founded in 2005 (Law 3374/2005). The mission of the Authority is to ensure high quality in higher education. As part of its mission, HAHE a) contributes in the formation and implementation of the national strategy for higher education and the distribution of financing for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and b) evaluates and accredits the operational quality of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

During the first years of its operation, the HQA drafted a framework of quality processes and communicated it to all HEIs, in an effort to establish the rudiments of a culture of quality assurance. This included, among others, the enrichment of the Registry of Experts and the organization of a series of preparatory meetings with the involved stakeholders (mainly the Vice-Rectors and the QAUs of the HEIs across the country). Admittedly, in the early years of its operation, the HQA was not as active as would be expected, mainly due to the lack of a quality evaluation culture in the Greek society, lack of funding, and serious understaffing issues. It was only until 2008 that the HQA launched the first external evaluation activities, initially at a limited number of HE academic units. From 2010 and onwards, the HQA achieved to obtain the necessary resources (basic infrastructure, NSRF funding, and a small team of administrative staff) and was able to expand and intensify its work (though still understaffed).

The enactment of Law 4009 in 2011 marked a significant reform of the HQA. The Agency was renamed as “Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency” and was assigned the additional task of the accreditation of the quality of the internal QA systems and the study programmes of the HEIs. In this context, the HQA planned and organized the accreditation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) of the Greek HEIs as well as the HE undergraduate study programmes. Again, there has been some serious delay in the implementation of the accreditation projects, mainly related to funding issues.

The next significant milestone in the history of this institution has been its reestablishment and strengthening of its role (addition of new responsibilities such as the contribution in the formulation and implementation of the national strategy for higher education, institutional agreements and performance allocation, thematic evaluation) with Law 4653/2020.

So far, in relation to external evaluation and accreditation to date, the HAHE (and its predecessor HQA):

- has implemented the external evaluation of 397 academic units of the Greek HEIs, with the contribution of 1.580 faculty members from foreign institutions (2008-2014),
- has implemented the external evaluation of 36 Greek HEIs (October 2015-July 2016),
- continues the accreditation of Internal Quality Assurance Systems and undergraduate study programmes of the HEIs across the country. Until the end of 2020, 22 IQAS and 142 study programmes had been accredited.

Further to the above, the HAHE:

- maintains a Registry of around 4.700 experts (academics and stakeholders) for the appointment of evaluation and accreditation panel members

- has developed the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA) for the collection and processing of data of the Higher Education of the country and the production of quality indicators
- prepares reports and studies on facts, trends and developments in the higher education sector
- conduct studies as commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, which contribute in the formulation of the national higher education strategy and the restructuring of the Greek map of higher education
- makes recommendations to HEIs as to quality assurance issues

5. Higher education quality assurance activities of the Authority

5.1. Accreditation ⁸

The accreditation process, as designed by the HQA, commences with the publication of a call to institutions to submit their proposals for accreditation (initially for their IQAS and then for their study programmes), as provided for by the relevant legislation. Furthermore, the publication of calls at regular intervals helps the Agency achieve a smoother coordination of the whole process in alignment with its resources and provides institutions with the opportunity to choose the most suitable time to engage in quality accreditation and prepare accordingly.

In 2018, the HAHE, following a public call for proposals for accreditation to the Institutions, completed twelve (12) Accreditations of Internal Quality Assurance Systems (IQAS) and (9) Accreditations of Undergraduate Programs (USP) of HEIs. The preparation of accreditation as a quality assurance action took over two years and involved both the development of the relevant accreditation material and the organization of the relevant procedures while informing and supporting the HEIs. In addition, during 2018, the Institutions were invited by the HAHE to submit their Follow-up Reports on improvements made from the previous external evaluation up until the first half of 2018 (two years after the last evaluation had been completed). The HAHE analyzed the reports and recorded the quality and quantity of the improvements made and came to useful conclusions on the progress of the Institutions. In the same year, the Institutions, on the basis of their legislated quality assurance obligations, submitted the annual quality data of their activities to the National Information System for Quality Assurance (NISQA). These have been processed by the HAHE through the development and monitoring of the appropriate indicators for measuring and evaluating academic activity, as well as the overall situation in the Greek Higher Education.

During the next 2 years, 10 IQAS and 133 Undergraduate Study Programmes were accredited with the help of independent experts from various parts of the world that participated as members of the Evaluation and Accreditation Panels. Three relevant detailed infographics concerning the composition of these panels appear in Annex VIII.

5.2. Follow up results: Continuous improvement

The HAHE monitors and analyses the improvement that is being achieved in HEIs on the basis of the data and information of the progress reports submitted by the Institutions. The requirement for HEIs to report progress is one of the mandates of Quality Assurance and is part of the principle of continuous improvement that governs the operation of quality systems. This is a two phase process, including:

- a) The external evaluation (not included in this report) follow up

The Universities have taken steps to eliminate the identified weaknesses and/or to achieve the objectives they have set to meet the recommendations made by the experts. At the level of fulfilment of the objectives for

⁸ The findings of IQAS and SP accreditation are presented in Annex VIII.

improvement, the respective percentages achieved by the Institutions ranged from 44% to 98%. Therefore, an average achievement rate of around 70% is considered to be a very significant improvement in the country's universities, which has been attained through the implementation of quality assurance.

In particular, most of the recommendations made by the experts include:

1. The need to improve study programs
2. The need to improve infrastructure, services, and information systems
3. The need to enhance the extroversion and internationalization of the institutions
4. The need to further develop and implement quality assurance procedures across the whole range of activities
5. The need to develop, implement, and monitor quality strategy and planning

b) The IQAS and USP Accreditation follow up, an activity which began in 2020 and is currently in progress. A brief presentation of findings from the accreditation of internal quality assurance systems and undergraduate study programme is presented in Annex II of the report.

The conclusions drawn from the follow up process are taken into consideration in the context of institutional internal evaluation aiming at continuous improvement.

6. Processes and their methodologies

6.1. Accreditation

Accreditation is an external evaluation process based on specific, predetermined, and internationally accepted quantitative and qualitative criteria and indicators that have been published in advance and are in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015). The purpose of accreditation is the assurance of the quality of higher education, as well as the effectiveness and transparency of the overall functioning of institutions of higher education.

6.1.1. General Principles of Accreditation

1. Accreditation is carried out with single criteria and quality assurance procedures for everyone, in accordance to the national legislation and the country's commitment as a member state in the European Higher Education Area.
2. It is a fair procedure, which is carried out in conditions of transparency and credentialism by an authorized independent authority.
3. It is based on evidence and it is realized by independent experts.
4. It leads to the decision on whether a study programme complies with a minimum of determined and published beforehand standards for accreditation.
5. The results of accreditation are published and are accessible to anyone interested.

6.1.2. The IQAS/study programme accreditation process

Accreditation is a pre-defined, reliable and useful process. In order to ensure and continually improve the quality of each institution's teaching and research work, as well as to ensure the effective operation and performance of its services, the internal quality assurance system must be developed in accordance with international practices, especially those of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and the principles and guidelines of the HAHE. The responsibility for the organization and implementation in each institution of higher education of an internal

QA system is assigned to the Quality Assurance Unit. The institutions' IQAS is periodically accredited by the HAHE. More specifically, the IQAS Accreditation Standard includes the following 8 requirements:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Institution Policy for Quality Assurance | 5. Self-Assessment |
| 2. Provision and Management of the Necessary Resources | 6. Collection of Quality Data: Measuring, Analysis and Improvement |
| 3. Establishing Goals for Quality Assurance | 7. Public Information |
| 4. Structure, Organization, and Operation of the IQAS | 8. External Evaluation and Accreditation of IQAS |

Regarding study programmes⁹, the accreditation process makes sure that the study programme offered by the institution meets all quality standards of the HAHE and the institution, and that the performance and skills of the students graduating from this specific course (learning outcomes) are consistent with the intended professional qualifications that are required by society and the labor market. Furthermore, it is certified that the study programme meets minimum quality criteria, as laid down in EHEA. The USP Accreditation Standard includes the following 10 requirements:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Quality Assurance Policy | 6. Learning Resources and Student Support |
| 2. Design and Approval of Programmes | 7. Information Management |
| 3. Student-Centered Learning, Teaching, and Assessment | 8. Public Information |
| 4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition, and Certification | 9. On-Going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes |
| 5. Teaching Staff | 10. Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes |

Given the operation of Foreign Language Programmes in Greek HEIs, the HAHE has also identified 11 requirements that constitute the FLP Quality Accreditation Standard:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Strategic Planning | 7. Learning Resources and Student Support of Foreign Language Programmes |
| 2. Quality Assurance Policy | 8. Collection, Analysis, and Use of Information for the Organization and Operation of Foreign Language Programmes |
| 3. Design, Approval, and Monitoring of the Quality of Foreign Language Programmes | 9. Public Information Concerning the Foreign Language Programmes |
| 4. Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment | 10. Periodic Internal Review of Foreign Language Programmes |
| 5. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications, Award of Degrees and Certificates of Qualifications of Foreign Language Programmes | 11. Regular External Evaluation and Accreditation of Foreign Language Programmes |
| 6. Ensuring High Quality of the Teaching Staff of the Foreign Language Programmes | |

The Authority has also developed a standard for new study programmes (NSP). This standard is divided into two parts, namely, Part 1 assesses the ability of an academic unit to organize and offer study programmes of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd study cycle while Part 2 evaluates and accredits a new study programme. The requirements for each part are presented below:

⁹ The Standard for quality accreditation of Master's (Level 7) and Ph.D Programmes (Level 8) is under development. As all HAHE Standards, they will be based on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG 2015) and their requirements that refer to the special characteristics of these programmes (e.g. ECTS, workload, students' responsibilities for Master Thesis/Ph.D dissertation, publications, teaching – research interaction).

Part 1: Assessment of the academic unit as per the fulfillment of criteria for the organization of study programmes of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd study cycle

1.1 Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit

Part 2: Evaluation and accreditation of the NSP

2.1 Quality policy

2.2 Design, approval and monitoring of quality of NSP

2.3 Student centered learning in teaching and assessment

2.4 Student admission, recognition of academic qualifications and awards of degrees and certificates of skills of NSP

2.5 Ensuring the adequacy and high quality of the teaching staff of the NSP

2.6 Learning resources and student support of NSP

2.7 Collection, analysis and use of information for the organization and operation of NSP

2.8 Public information concerning the NSP

2.9 Periodic internal review of NSP

2.10 Regular external evaluation and assessment of NSP

The accreditation process is implemented consistently and includes the following steps:

1. Submission of IQAS/USP accreditation proposal by the institution (self-assessment report)
2. External evaluation of IQAS/USP carried out by a panel of independent experts, which includes a site visit¹⁰ to the institution
3. Submission to the HAHE of the accreditation report resulting from the IQAS/USP accreditation process
4. Publication of the accreditation decision by the HAHE
5. Consistent follow-up of the IQAS/USP operation by the IQAS (QAU)

Before initiating the process, the HAHE organizes an extensive briefing of the experts in its offices (or on line) with the Chairman and members of the Accreditation Committee, discussing the specific issues of accreditation. More specifically, the topics of this briefing are:

- The purpose of the site visit
- The roles and responsibilities of the panel members
- The current legal framework of Greek HEIs
- The use and understanding of the Standard for Quality Assurance of the IQAS/SP
- The link between evidence and information, analysis and conclusions of the Accreditation Proposal
- The schedule and organization of the site visit
- The preparation of the Accreditation Report
- The submission of the final accreditation Report and accreditation process

The above briefing is mandatory and it is chaired by a member of the HAHE. It usually takes place one or two days before the site visit and has a total duration of about 90 minutes. It also gives the members of the Panel the opportunity to have one or two meetings to distribute the work amongst themselves and to make general preparations prior to the site or on line visit.

The Accreditation Panel is invited to assess the overall compliance of the IQAS/USP with the Standard, but does not make the final accreditation decision. This is the sole responsibility of the Evaluation and Accreditation Council. In case of positive outcomes, full or satisfactory compliance of the IQAS/USP with the Standard is decided. If there is a partial or non-compliance of the IQAS/USP with the Standard, the reasons that led the Panel to this conclusion should be analysed.

The Panel's judgment is, in principle, recorded on a per-demand basis and represents the degree of compliance of the IQAS or USP with the HAHE standards. The four levels (degrees) of the IQAS/USP compliance with the HAHE standard are the following:

¹⁰ Additional information regarding the site visit is available in the HAHE Accreditation Guide (https://www.ethaae.gr/images/articles/701-odigos_pistopoiisis_en.pdf)

- Fully compliant: The IQAS/USP is entirely in accordance with the accreditation criterion which is implemented in an effective manner.
- Substantially compliant: The IQAS/USP is to a large extent in accordance with the accreditation criterion, the principle/spirit of which is followed in practice.
- Partially compliant: Some aspects or parts of the criterion are met while others are not. The interpretation of the criterion is correct, but the manner of implementation is not effective enough.
- Non-compliant: The IQAS/USP fails to comply with this criterion.

The overall Panel judgment is based on the assessment of the individual requirements and results in one of the four degrees of compliance.

Finally, HAHE in order to continue its quality assurance activities in the context of COVID 19 and based on ENQA`s suggestions drafted a process for an on-line (site visit) review by using electronic means. The process is presented below:

Stages of the procedure

The review is conducted by the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) with the following modifications:

1. Information of the Institution

- 1.1 The Institution is informed about the scheduled time period of the accreditation review.
- 1.2 The Institution submits any additional material to the HAHE. The production of video or relevant digital material for the presentation of the Institutional facilities, classrooms, labs, scientific equipment, etc. is recommended. It is advised that the material is uploaded on the website of the Institution or the Department.

2. Provision of the material prepared by the Institution to the experts

- 2.1 HAHE sends the material prepared by the Institution, including any additional support material.

3. Organization of the review by the use of electronic means

The review is conducted electronically without any transportation on behalf of the experts. During the conduct of the review by the use of electronic means, the following new conditions apply:

- 3.1 All meetings will take place through a widely used Teleconference Platform (TP) (e.g. Zoom, WebEx etc.). The relevant links for these meetings should be included in the final schedule of the review by the use of electronic means.
- 3.2 The Institution should have the necessary equipment for the teleconference and should be able to offer immediate technical support for the conduct of the review by the use of electronic means. The Institution should be able to provide a suitable room, adequately equipped (with a projector, screen, etc.), to host all participants on behalf of the Institution who wish to be physically present, as deemed appropriate.
- 3.3 The Institution will be responsible for the organization of the meetings and will designate a person to undertake the technical support for the communication between HAHE and EEAP for each review conducted by the use of electronic means. This person will deal with any issues of technical nature that might arise during the meetings. The person responsible for the technical support will also act as the host (the person who invites the participants of the teleconference) of the meetings among the members of the EEAP and the Institution.
- 3.4 The Institution should have the necessary transmission infrastructure (on-line camera) to cover a tour of the campus, or video to cover the tour of the key facilities of the Institution.
- 3.5 The President of the EEAP will act as the host for the meetings of the Panel members.
- 3.6 Depending on the working timetable, a tour of the website of the Institution or the Department, or a tour of the Institutional facilities via electronic means may take place. This session might include electronic tour of the campus, campus maps, photos of the various venues, etc. However, while investigating compliance to the Standards for Quality Accreditation, the Panel has the right to ask for a focus of the tour on certain

facilities (e.g. dormitories, library, points where Quality Policy is demonstrated, the Quality Assurance Office).

3.7 The procedure of the review by the use of electronic means takes into account the provisions on the protection of personal data.

6.1.3. Building on results

At the time during which the positive accreditation decision is still valid, the Authority's Evaluation and Accreditation Council, ex officio or after an inquiry of the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, may examine if the accreditation criteria are still met. This is achieved through the analysis of follow up reports after 2 years from accreditation. If the accreditation standards are not met, the EAC withdraws the accreditation and informs immediately the relevant HEI and the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs.

The rector should inform the Authority when the accreditation criteria are not being met or when there is ambiguity.

The positive, upon conditions, decision is the case when the criteria are not met and a time schedule is given for compliance with the criteria and the reviewing of the decision. The E&A Council decides which additional evidence should be required by institutions and whether a new site visit is necessary. It then issues a new decision.

If the accreditation decision is negative, the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs may by decision constrain the funding of the HEI and the enrolment of new students to the programme of studies or the HEI, depending on the object of the accreditation (programme of studies or internal quality assurance system).

The same decision provides students of study programmes or HEIs the possibility of continuing their studies in another accredited programme of studies or HEI respectively and regulates all relevant issues.

The accreditation reports produced by the accreditation panels and the accrediting decisions (including negative decisions) by the Authority's Council are communicated to HEIs and the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs and publicized in the HAHE website¹¹. The Ministry keeps a Registry of all the accredited programmes of studies and HEIs with an accredited internal quality assurance system.

6.1.4. Experts - The constitution of independent expert committees

As part of the HAHE's responsibilities and in accordance with its institutional framework, as laid down in Law 4653/2020, the Authority draws up and keeps a Registry of Experts for the sole purpose of setting up panels of independent experts taking part in accreditation, evaluation and quality assurance processes in general.

The Registry of Experts has been in use since the beginning of the HAHE's operation and has been gradually updated by the HAHE staff taking into account suggestions of the institutions and their departments, the Authority's members, and other bodies relevant to the work of the Authority.

With a view to ensuring extroversion and further expanding the Registry, following the implementation of the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, registration on the Registry is now possible for all interested parties through a digital platform. By using that platform, the candidate can submit his/her application to Registry by filling in the required fields on his/her scientific and professional profile. Applications are examined by the EAC of the HAHE and interested parties are informed whether their application has been accepted or not.

¹¹ IQAS Accreditation reports and decisions (in Greek), Available at <https://www.ethaae.gr/en/quality-assurance/iqas-accreditation>
Study programmes accreditation reports and decisions (in Greek), Available at <https://www.ethaae.gr/en/quality-assurance/undergraduate-programme-accreditation-reports>

The experts whose application has been approved are active members of the Registry of Experts and can be selected to participate in accreditation panels according to the Authority's criteria each time, which comply both with the Authority's institutional operational framework and with the general principles of academic profile, impartiality and meritocracy.

The Registry includes domestic and foreign scientists of an established reputation, professors teaching in higher education institutions, or distinguished researchers in domestic or foreign research institutions. Preferably the experts have prior experience in the accreditation and evaluation of institutions of higher education. The Registry also includes representatives from professional or other scientific associations who can appreciate the contribution of studies to professional practice.

Members of the E&A Council of the Authority, as well as special scientific staff working with it in any way, cannot be included in the Registry.

7. The Authority's internal quality assurance

7.1. Quality Manual

The Quality Manual is an official document of the IQAS and is used as a guide for its implementation. It consists of work modules called processes designed to meet the requirements of the ESG. Processes take into account input data which are necessary for the operation of the process. The process results in output data. Each process is internally evaluated in terms of its own functionality and for its effectiveness. The procedure is the way the process is implemented. The procedure has a start and an end point as well as intermediate steps. Procedures include steps that must be followed to achieve the expected outcome of the process. Process documentation is achieved through the necessary documents and forms.

7.1.1. Quality Policy¹²

The purpose of the HAHE's quality policy is to continuously and systematically ensure, improve and enhance the quality of all components of its work. This policy includes specific quality assurance actions, with the aim of creating a framework within which the Authority must operate. Consequently, the quality assurance policy reflects the HAHE's systematic, structured and continuous commitment to providing high quality assurance services, recognizing that the primary responsibility for quality assurance rests with the Authority itself.

7.1.2. Resources' Management

The process aims to create an environment conducive to achieving the Authority's objectives. This can be achieved by ensuring the necessary resources (tangible and intangible) and tools needed for the operation, maintenance and continuous improvement of its Internal Quality Assurance System in achieving its goals.

7.1.2.1. Quality Toolkit

- [National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education \(OPESP\)](#)
- [Registry of Experts](#)

¹² HAHE Quality Policy, Available at <https://www.ethaae.gr/en/about-hahe/quality-policy>

7.1.3. Quality goal setting

The Authority specifies its strategy at the level of quality assurance, through timely identified qualitative and quantitative objectives, which are measured and reviewed in the context of the operation of the IQAS. The process aims at establishing clear and defined objectives for the continuous improvement of the Authority and includes: a) The specification of the strategy with annual quality goals (based on the SMART approach) according to a specific template by the Director General in collaboration with the directorates, b) the proposal of quality goals` targets by the Director-General to the Council and its approval by the Council and c) their annual monitoring and preparation of the annual report.

7.1.4. Standards` setting and reviewing

The HAHE seeks to establish high quality standards for assuring quality in the Greek higher education. The Authority develops the standards for its quality assurance activities through a comprehensive analysis of ESG standards and guidelines, research on international experience and consultation with higher education institutions and stakeholders¹³. The final draft standards are approved by the Authority`s Council, communicated to institutions/other interested parties and published on the HAHE website. The standards are regularly reviewed to document their relevance and effectiveness and they are updated in accordance with ENQA directives, trends and developments in higher education.

7.1.5. Organization of quality assurance activities (for Institutions)

External quality assurance involves three steps: (a) an internal evaluation by the Institution through its Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) within the IQAS framework; (b) an external evaluation by a panel of independent experts and (c) submission of a follow-up report by the institution to the HAHE. The process focuses on improving the quality and effectiveness of the institutional QAS and USP. Notably, the process aims at the implementation of a continuous improvement strategy for institutional educational services and their compliance with the requirements of the HAHE Quality Standards (The HAHE Quality Standards for IQAS and Study programme accreditation have been developed, based on the ESG 2015-Annex VII). Moreover, the process aims at matching graduates' performance and competences with the expected professional qualifications in alignment with the needs of society and the labor market. The institutions and their departments take the necessary steps to utilize the IQAS and study programmes' recommendations and improve.

7.1.6. Measurement, analysis, improvement (system wide analysis)

The HAHE collects, processes and manages data from the educational, research and other academic activities of higher education institutions, as well as their administrative/organizational performance. The collection of data is achieved through the National Information System for Quality Assurance (NISQA) in higher education, in which the Quality Assurance Units of institutions enter data of all academic units (institutions, departments, undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes) on an annual basis. The data are divided into the following categories, namely a) students and graduates, b) human resources, c) structure and organization of study programmes, d) infrastructure and services, e) research, f) finance, g) internal quality assurance systems.

At the same time, the Authority collects and processes data related to its internal operation in order to facilitate decision-making at all levels of operation and to document the introduction of improvements. For example, all directorates prepare progress reports of their activities which help in measuring performance on an annual basis

¹³ Chambers and institutions.

(e.g. weekly workload per employee per accreditation, time to schedule per accreditation project, % actions undertaken to deviations, average resolution time per complaint/issue reported by HEIs).

The purpose of this process is to collect, analyze and use quality data in the internal evaluation of the IQAS processes and the decision-making process for each level of the HAHE, in order to improve it.

7.1.7. Communication to institutions

The Authority communicates regularly with higher education institutions, informs them about the requirements, purpose and benefits of the various quality assurance activities, organizes workshops and seminars for presenting the results of its activities and engages them in consultation whenever necessary (e.g. formulation of standards, documents).

7.1.8. Public information

The HAHE is required to publish the activities (quality assurance, opinions, studies) that fall within the scope of its responsibilities and their results, whether related to higher education institutions, policy makers or themselves. The purpose of this process is to make the information accessible, timely and written with objectivity and clarity.

7.1.8.1. Reports Publication: accountability and transparency

- Annual Reports for the quality of Greek Higher Education
- Reports of the quality assurance processes results (e.g. external evaluation, follow up, accreditation)

7.1.9. Follow up, monitoring activities and continuous improvement

This process aims to investigate whether the HAHE continues to operate in alignment with the ESG standards and guidelines. Potential errors/deviations are detected through monitoring mechanisms (use of qualitative and quantitative indicators, feedback from external experts and stakeholders) and corrective action is taken whenever necessary. For example, the Authority organizes meetings and consultations with each distinct stakeholder group and collects their views, opinions and ideas before the approval of any QA documentation and/or process. It moreover, utilizes results from institutional accreditation reports and HAHE accreditation/follow up reports to set improvement goals, responsibilities and time frames. The Internal Quality Assurance System is reviewed at least once a year. However, other reviews are possible should it be considered necessary.

7.1.10. Organization of HAHE external quality assurance and accreditation

The external review of the HAHE against the ESG by ENQA includes: (a) an internal assessment of the Authority's IQAS and (b) an external evaluation by an independent experts panel. The process focuses on improving the quality and effectiveness of the IQAS. In particular, the process aims to implement a strategy of continuous quality improvement of the quality assurance and accreditation services provided to higher education institutions and policy makers in accordance with ESG2015 requirements. External evaluation is a periodically repeated process. The HAHE Directorates take the necessary steps to utilize the IQAS feedback (by the experts) and improve.

In addition, the Authority conducts thematic analyses of accreditation reports on an annual basis, to support the follow up process and decision making for continuous improvement. The conclusions drawn from the analysis are

used for enhancing the accreditation process itself based on the principles of transparency and accountability. Findings are included and published in the Annual Report for Quality in Higher Education.

8. The Authority's international activities

In 2016, the HQA (member of INQAAHE since 2014) broadened its relations with similar international and European actors as well as with actors operating in the field of higher education. It participated actively in the lively dialogue on quality assurance issues and all respective activities. As the national actor responsible for quality assurance in Greek universities, the HQA was invited to take part in the OECD Higher Education Stakeholder Forum, held in Paris. The forum aimed at providing data and information for the further development of the two aspects of the project "Improving the performance of the higher education system", in the context of benchmarking the performance of higher education systems and their relevance to the labour market. An additional objective of the forum was to provide feedback from a wide range of higher education representatives on the key challenges facing HEIs and how countries and / or institutions of higher education are responding to these issues.

At the European level, the HQA was an ENQA member. Hence, the Authority is actively involved in ENQA's bodies and decisions, and is called upon to respond to the new challenges presented to EHEA by participating in a fruitful debate on current developments in the field of quality assurance in higher education.

The Authority participated in the 7th ENQA General Assembly (Gloucester, October 2016) and in cooperation with ENQA organized in Athens (December 12-13, 2016) a conference on the "Social Dimension of E-Learning - Meeting QA Challenges". The main focus of the conference was on how quality assurance enhances confidence and accessibility in e-learning and highlights its social dimension. At the conference, extensive reference was made to the European project TeSLA (Adaptive Trust-based e-assessment System for Learning), which aimed to develop a credible e-assessment system for higher education institutions offering e-learning programmes. The conference was attended by HEI representatives from Greece and abroad, as well as executives of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Authorities. The HAHE was also represented at a meeting of the Association of Medical Schools in Europe (AMSE) on quality assurance issues in the health sciences sector (Berlin, March 2016).

In 2017, the HQA, followed the international scientific debate on quality assurance issues and developments in the field of Higher Education internationally. At European level, it also participated in the ENQA bodies and decisions, systematically following European policies on Higher Education Quality Assurance and developments in EHEA in general.

The Authority, in accordance with the requirements of ENQA, is periodically evaluated for its ability to carry out its work and is certified to fulfil the relevant requirements by ENQA. In this context, it drafted and sent in June 2017 the follow-up report on the implementation of the recommendations for its development and development, which had been formulated in June 2015, in the process of acquiring membership for ENQA.

In the context of the HQA's international activities and partnerships, its President and General Director participated in the 1st Conference on "Quality Assurance and Enhancement of Higher Education" held in Cyprus on 26.05.2017, upon invitation by the Rector of the University of Nicosia and the Cyprus Authority of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA). Through its Vice-President, the Authority participated in the activity "PLA on fine-tuning recognition processes: challenges, strategies, tools" held in Athens on 26 & 27-04-2017, which is an action of the GEAR project implemented by the Directorate General of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the State Scholarship Foundation.

During the next year (2018), the HQA followed the international scientific debate on quality assurance issues and developments in the field of Higher Education internationally. In the context of its collaborations and monitoring of international developments in the field of higher education quality, the HAHE was represented by its General Director at a meeting of UNESCO and the AAQ (The Swiss Authority of Accreditation and Quality Assurance) "Assurance in Higher Education: Challenges, Developments and Trends" held in February 2018 in Geneva. The main

outcomes of the meeting have been the identification of major opportunities and challenges for the development of quality in higher education as well as the new issues related to the role of higher education and quality within a sustainable development framework. Further development strategies were explored to involve governments, quality assurance bodies, HEIs and other stakeholders in enhancing quality assurance so as to increase the responsiveness to system transformation needs. There was also an exchange of good quality practices in higher education and the creation of a report within each geographical area of Europe on quality issues.

At European level, exactly as in the previous years, the Authority participated in the ENQA bodies and decisions, systematically following European policies on Higher Education Quality Assurance and developments in EHEA in general.

In this context, the Vice President of HQA and the General Director, participated in the 8th annual meeting of ENQA members organized by the Agencia de Calidad y Prospectiva Universitaria de Aragón (ACPUA), held in Zaragoza on April 19-20, 2018. During this meeting issues like the mutual recognition of academic qualifications in EHEA countries and the social dimension of quality assurance were discussed.

The HQA was also represented at the 9th ENQA General Assembly held in Kazakhstan on October 18-19, 2018 with the participation of Vice President. The main themes of the annual general meeting were the issues of quality certification and, in particular, the selection and training of experts.

Through its participation in the above activities, the HAHE gained significant knowledge about:

1. the developments regarding higher education in the EHEA
2. the implementation of good practices in specialized quality assurance issues (e.g. evaluation of learning outcomes, use of digital tools in quality assurance, stakeholder communication practices)
3. the scientific approach to new aspects regarding the growth and operation of higher education institutions
4. the issues related to the implementation of the ENQA Statute and decision-making

In 2019, the HQA participated in the Balkan`s University Association Conference hosted by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (16-18/4/2019). The theme of the conference has been the “Implementation of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in the Balkan Region: The Role of the Universities”. The President of the Authority delivered a speech on the “Academic Accreditation requirements in European Higher Education Area and National Quality Assurance Agencies”. Some days later (24-26 April 2019), the Authority was represented by its President and General Director at the 9th annual meeting of ENQA members held in Tallinn, Estonia.

The HQA was also represented at the 10th ENQA General Assembly held in Yerevan, Armenia on October 16-18, 2019 organized by ANQA (National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation).

In addition, during November of the same year there has been a meeting between the HQA and the CYQAA to discuss matters of mutual interest, such as the quality assurance of study programmes in relation to the national and European qualifications` framework, matters of joint study programmes between Greece and Cyprus, possibilities and further collaboration prospects with the final aim of signing a memorandum of cooperation between the HAHE and the CYQAA.

In 2020, the Authority participated at the ENQA`s online general assembly which was held in place of the 10th ENQA Members` Forum (that was postponed due to COVID19) in April and in October as well.

9. Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (For QA Agencies - 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.

The mission of the Authority is the assurance of high quality in higher education. In order for this to happen, the HAHE evaluates and accredits the quality in HEIS operation, both in respect of their internal quality assurance system and their study programmes taught in all three higher education cycles and offered by their academic units. The Authority guarantees the transparency of all of its actions in this area. In addition, as part of its mission (Law 4653/2020), the Authority supports the state and institutions of higher education in the formulation and implementation of the national strategy for higher education. The National Higher Education Strategy is implemented through institutional planning agreements which are monitored by the Authority. These planning agreements are further specified and implemented on an annual basis, covering the following topics:

(a) the character and mission of each HEI, its position in Greece and globally, its objectives and of its academic units, on a ranked and prioritized basis,

(b) the determination, planning, and measures for the development and support of HEIS educational, research activities and objectives,

(c) the development of infrastructure and equipment,

(d) the improvement of the provided services,

(e) the coordination of the academic, educational, and research activities of the HEI with the corresponding developments in foreign institutions, (in particular) the developments and prospects in the European Higher Education and Research Area.

2. Regarding financial issues, the institutional contracts shall lay down more specific details on the following matters for each HEI: (a) operating expenses, (b) investment, and (c) staff in each category.

Goals and Objectives

To carry out its mission, the HAHE: a) formulates, organizes, specifies, standardizes and publicly communicates processes, criteria and quality indicators, b) develops an integrated information management system and assessment database, in cooperation with institutional quality assurance units, c) supports institutions of higher education and their individual units in the planning of quality assurance and accreditation procedures and d) conducts studies and surveys relevant to its mission or assigns them to third parties. The aforementioned activities are included in 5 strategic goals, which are further analysed below:

1. Organizational development

The HAHE since 2015 invested in its development as an organization, by utilizing all lessons learned from its previous operations, acting as a stepping stone of its success. At the same time, the HAHE utilized benchmarking and process reengineering to attain a sustainable level of competitiveness. The Authority foresees itself as a highly adaptive and responsive organization, vested in its mission. Towards this end, it will (and does) invest in its people, catering to their streamlined contribution in the Authority and their continuous professional development altogether. The organizational structure of the agency by Law is that of a traditional (hierarchical) organization, but at the same time, current mandates require the Authority functioning as a pristine project organization.

Therefore, in essence, the Authority practically follows a matrix organizational form, wherein all employees hold an official title, role, and responsibility, but depending on the project at hand, project teams can be developed that cross different departments and hierarchies. This process offers a viable roadmap into innovation, organizational adaptiveness, and sustainability. The HAHE's organisational chart has been gradually developed from 2015 to the present according to the above philosophy.

2. Development of the accreditation process

A major challenge for the Authority has been the establishment of a current and universally accepted accreditation process that will surface as one promoting the education, knowledge-creation, and innovation produced in the Greek higher education domain, with the vision to excel internationally. The accreditation process follows the ESG 2015. The HAHE has developed four accreditation standards (IQAS, USP, FLSP, NSP) and relevant materials, such as an accreditation guide, accreditation proposal/report templates, mapping grids, guidelines for accreditation panels.

3. Application of internal QA instruments

In 2015, the HAHE developed the "OPESP" (National Information System for Quality Assurance-NISQA) which is structured into five (5) subsystems: (a) Higher Education Quality Data, (b) Business Intelligence (BI), (c) Independent Experts` Registry d) Accreditation Management and (e) Internal Operation.

4. Reconciliation of the communication gap with HEI

The Authority is vested in effective and efficient communications with all its stakeholders, but especially with its principal stakeholder, the HEIs. The Authority realizes that it holds the gravest of responsibility towards the end of communication with the HEIs. This includes the responsibility to not only set the baseline but nurture for efficient and holistic communication with all stakeholders, in perpetuity. To this end, during the last five years, the Authority organised up to 40 workshops and informative events and concurrently answered up to 1000 relevant questions made by HEIs.

5. Proficiency to function competitively in the international environment

The Authority is vested in functioning effectively in an international environment and utilizing benchmarking and process reengineering within itself. In addition, the Authority conducts studies and surveys to extract and reverse-engineer the state of the art in any of its respective fields of interest and thereupon provides consultation and guidance in the State and the HEIs.

HAHE stakeholder's involvement

Nearly all functions of the Authority involve stakeholder engagement. The stakeholders, as referenced within Annex V, take part in the governance and activities of the Authority through an open dialogue, taking place before the approval of any QA documentation and/or process, where the stakeholders can submit their views, opinions, and ideas. Within the framework of this open dialogue, the Authority has meetings and consultations with each distinct stakeholder group.

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.

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) (located in Athens) is an independent administrative authority and its mission is to ensure high quality in Higher Education. It was established by Law 4653/2020 and is the continuation of the Hellenic Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (HQA), which was established and has been operating since 2006. The Authority is managed by its President and Supreme Council. It has administrative autonomy and is supervised by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, who exercises oversight control of legality.

The HAHE, in the context of its mission: a) contributes in the formation and implementation of the national strategy for higher education and the distribution of financing for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and b) evaluates and accredits the operational quality of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The Authority guarantees the transparency of all its actions; the latter are made public through its official website.

To fulfill its mission, the HAHE maintains an integrated information system for the extraction and management of higher education data and cooperates with international networks and agencies that are active in any domain related to its mission. The HAHE is a member of a) the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2015 and b) the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education since 2014.

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.

Organizational Independence

The HAHE is an independent public agency governed by its President and Supreme Council, as explicitly stipulated in Law 4653/2020. Its members enjoy personal and operational independence while performing their duties.

Selection of the HAHE President

The President shall be appointed by decision of the Council of Ministers, following a proposal from the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs, with consent from the Special Permanent Committee on Institutions and Transparency of the Hellenic Parliament.

Selection of the HAHE Supreme Council members

The President of HAHE shall, within fifteen days from the date of his/her appointment, launch an open public tender to fill the posts of members of the Authority's Supreme Council. The President shall set up a three-member committee for the evaluation of candidates. The committee shall comprise the President and two active/retired full professors from Greek higher education institutions or active/retired professors from foreign higher education institutions, who shall draw up an evaluation list for the candidates who have the formal and pertinent qualifications on the basis of their scientific, research, and teaching background. In classifying the candidates, attention shall also be directed towards their respective experience in the management of higher education institutions and in quality assurance. The President shall forward the candidates of the evaluation list to the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs and to the rectors of the higher educational institutions. If three quarters of the rectors object to a specific candidate within five days from the date of notification, said candidate shall be deleted from the classification list and replaced by the following candidate in the list. The Minister for Education and Religious Affairs shall, as per the final classification list, appoint the four members of the Supreme Council by a decision to be published in the Hellenic Government Gazette.

The Vice-President shall be selected from among the members of the Supreme Council by vote taken during its kick-off meeting.

Selection of the HAHE Evaluation and Accreditation Council members

The Evaluation and Accreditation Council is composed of the HAHE President, a Vice President that shall be selected from among its members by vote taken during its kick-off meeting, eight members from the teaching and research staff of higher education institutions, a student representative and a representative of the Technical

Chamber of Greece, the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, and the Economic Chamber of Greece, as proposed by these chambers.

To select the EAC members, the President of HAHE shall launch a public tender in order to fill in the respective posts and set up a three-member selection committee consisting of the President of the Authority and two outsiders as members, for each discipline, i.e. active/retired full professors from Greek higher education institutions or active/retired professors from foreign higher education institutions. The committee shall draw up an evaluation list for the candidates who have the formal and substantive qualifications based on their scientific, research, and teaching background. In classifying the candidates, attention shall also be directed towards their experience in quality assurance and accreditation in higher education, as evidenced by their participation in evaluation committees and collective bodies responsible for quality assurance in higher education institutions and their relevant scientific and research background. The President shall notify the candidate evaluation list to the rectors of the higher educational institutions. If three quarters of the rectors object to a specific candidate within five days from the date of notification, that candidate shall be deleted from the classification list and replaced by the following candidate in the list. The EAC shall hold its kick-off meeting within fifteen days from the date of publication of the decision on the appointment of its members in the Hellenic Government Gazette. In the event that a student fails to participate or that the Technical Chamber of Greece, the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece and the Economic Chamber of Greece fail to propose a joint representative, the quorum of EAC meetings, which is necessary for establishing its lawful setup and adopting decisions on any agenda item, shall be calculated on the basis of the rest of its appointed members.

General Director and members of the HAHE administrative and scientific staff

As noted earlier, the HAHE is supported in its operations by an administrative and scientific service, which is headed by the General Director. The General Director is appointed by HAHE for 4 years, after public notice of the position and evaluation of candidates by a three-member committee appointed by the Council from among its members, following the recommendation of the President.

For the administrative and scientific support of the Authority, twenty five special scientific staff posts and fifteen permanent administrative staff posts are established. Scientific and administrative staff posts may be filled by way of transferring or seconding permanent personnel from Ministries or other public services or public entities under public law, or by way of transferring primary or secondary education teachers. Special scientific staff is employed under private law, open ended employment contracts.

Operational Independence

The HAHE is solely responsible for designing and implementing its own methods and procedures for internal and external quality assurance, selecting the member of evaluation panels/committees, developing schedules, deciding on the content of reports, making evidence based decisions and specifying criteria for centres of excellence. The Standards for Accreditation are approved by the Authority's Evaluation and Accreditation Council. Other interested parties, such as higher education institutions, ministries or stakeholders have no effect on the implementation of the HAHE's quality assurance processes, decisions or evaluation results. In addition, while appropriations for the operation of the HAHE are entered in the budget of the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs separately (following negotiations between the Authority and the Ministry of Finance), the HAHE can independently decide how to use.

The Authority shall conclude program design agreements for its activities and objectives with the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs. The Authority shall also prepare and submit annual reports of its proceedings to the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs.

Independence of experts

The existing legislation gives utmost importance to the independence of experts, and sets clear and strict criteria for determining conflict of interest. The selection and appointment of experts is carried out by the HAHE to avoid conflicts of interest and to preserve the integrity of the process. When appointing experts to a Panel, the key requirement is that the members of the Panel should have a sufficient level of knowledge, experience, and expertise to conduct the review to a high standard and be totally independent of the HEI or study program under review. Experts are required to notify the HAHE in writing of any connection with the HEI/study program which could result in a potential conflict of interest. Furthermore, experts are required to notify the HAHE as soon as possible of any changes which occur during the process. All experts are informed that they act in a personal capacity and not as a representative for their own organization.

In addition, the QAU of the evaluation academic unit must notify the HAHE in writing of any potential conflict of interest of one or more members of the Panel with the HEI/study program under review.

Independence of formal outcomes

As described earlier, the HAHE's independence is legally stipulated. The Authority's decisions are not subject to political or any other third party influence and the HAHE does not experience pressure neither from institutions nor the Ministry. The HAHE E&A Council is the ultimate arbiter of all decisions related to the Authority's quality assurance activities.

The Authority may recommend to the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs the total or partial suspension of funding of an institution, if the institution is at fault for not providing the required information and materials and the obligatory documentation.

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.

The HAHE annually, through its quality assurance activities, collects and processes a significant wealth of data and information regarding quality in higher education. It more specifically studies and analyses experts' reports findings and recommendations, raw data from institutions and their key performance indicators (through the NISQA), international trends in higher education and the country's performance, comments and suggestions regarding the processes made by the experts and the institutions. The knowledge which is produced, allows for sound conclusions with respect to the weaknesses, strengths and areas for improvement at the institutional and study programme level. These conclusions are included in the Authority's annual report, which represents a guide and a useful tool for their further utilization. In addition to that, all the Authority's reports and studies are published (open access) on its website. For example, documents which are produced from the HAHE's quality assurance activities (e.g. institutional /departmental/study programme external evaluation reports, IQAS and study programmes accreditation reports) are also freely and publicly available.

The utilization of results (presented in these reports) is achieved through a) considerations for improvements in quality standards, used by the HAHE, b) their integration in the process of suggesting the national strategy for higher education, c) the formulation of institutional/study programme strategy and d) the improvement of HAHE processes.

From 2014 to 2020, the HAHE organized, coordinated and conducted external evaluations of the Greek higher education institutions, formed the accreditation framework and completed the first 22 IQAS and 143 SP

accreditations. The accreditation process continues. There are 58 study programmes accreditation that have been scheduled for the first semester of 2021.

The conclusions from IQAS and study programme accreditation are presented below, followed by the HAHE future actions:

Accreditation of Internal Quality Assurance Systems - Analysis and Conclusions

- The systematic involvement of students in the evaluation of courses, teachers, and the learning environment and the utilization of their feedback
- The systematic involvement of external stakeholders in sharing their views

With reference to any directions provided to Institutions, the HAHE has to include a process that will share the totality of the quality assurance documentation with external stakeholders, with the provision to acquire, analyse, and utilize their feedback. This process should be considered a baseline for the honest expression of opinions and ideas derived from external stakeholders and must include any ideas for skills and competences evolution, the potential for developing excellence and innovation, points of interest, and the potential for financing. The process should definitely involve a traceable and written process (that could include a questionnaire). If the questionnaire is selected as the vessel of stakeholder feedback and involvement, the aforementioned points must pertain to the instrument's substantive elements.

Especially with reference to students, a culture should be nurtured where the latter can interestingly contribute to the quality assurance process and to a wider extent. Students should be able to actively contribute in the QA process (e.g. the students could offer feedback to the conclusions of HAHE reports). Students should also be active (and represented) in Quality Assurance Units of Institutions, in Internal Evaluation Groups, and in offering their feedback and opinions with reference to their expectations as per the curriculum, the syllabi, etc.

As a general guideline, all elements of the internal quality systems should foster, safeguard, nurture, and endorse a culture of quality.

- Quality Assurance Units with sufficient and qualified staff with upgraded and enriched decision-making roles and capacity

The HAHE must establish a timeline (inclusive of a definitive deadline) for the conformance of the Institutions as per the effective and adequate staffing of the internal Quality Assurance Units. There should be constraints as per the professional specializations of the staffing of the Units, indicatively with reference to the interim report. The Institutions should be aware that non-conformance can lead to the revocation of accreditation.

- Implementation of internal evaluation in accordance with established quality assurance procedures across the range of academic and administrative activities (curricula, research, resources, services, and infrastructure)

The HAHE should include a deadline (follow up report) for the complete operation of the Internal Quality Assurance Systems in accordance to the implementation of internal quality assessment within the total administration of the Institution and in accordance with the mandates of total quality control. System inspection by Quality Assurance Units of Institutions should be conducted at least twice.

- Improving quality targeting and linking it to the Institution's strategy for (a) its scope at all levels of operation and (b) its scientific and technical excellence based on SMART characteristics (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound)

Most non-conformances apply here.

- Systematically measuring the data and information of academic and administrative activity through information systems and utilizing these in decision making for improvement

There should be complete implementation of a management information system that has decision making assistance capacity. The HAHE has to undertake the conformance control process with a relevant timeline and penalties. In addition, the Institutions have to employ a reliability control process.

- Structured, extensive and systematic dissemination of information through the Institutional website

The communication of all information should be bilingually and publicly available through the respective institutional websites. The same applies for the progress achieved regarding the recommendations made in the framework of external evaluation.

It is worth noting that HAHE is responsible for coordinating a new NSRF project which aims to redesign and restructure the internal processes of HEIs for quality assurance, so that they become more efficient and effective and further strengthen the culture of quality. The project involves the training of HEIs staff on quality assurance issues and the development of a structured academic system for managing and using data and through an interface for connecting the information systems of institutions with the NISQA.

Accreditation of Undergraduate Study Programmes - Analysis and Conclusions

From the analysis of USP accreditation reports so far, it becomes obvious that Undergraduate Programs have improved significantly from the previous external evaluation of the Departments, notably in terms of updating their subjects and reducing the excessive number of courses where it was identified as a problem. At this stage, the negatives that are most frequently recorded and should be addressed immediately relate to:

- The implementation of systematic monitoring of student progress in combination with the development of methods for addressing cases of weak student performance.

Each academic unit is advised to develop and introduce a specific systematic process for monitoring students' progress. A useful tool is the full utilization of the E Class platform (already available to all universities) which allows teaching staff to gain an accurate idea of how students engage with the course content, interact with each other and perform in various course requirements (self-assessment tests, exercises, written assignments). Basic statistical data for students' performance are also available and can be used for improving the course and teaching process and for offering specialized advice to students that perform poorly. In addition, students are able to get immediate feedback after completion of learning tasks. Aggregated data on students' performance by course and semester are available for analysis through each department's student information system.

Weak students' performance can be addressed through

- The help of academic mentors who discuss student progress, investigate whether there are non-academic reasons, and offer advice on appropriate study or other measures to be taken. Mentors can also mediate between a student and other faculty member if necessary, or seek help from a higher-level person.
- Choices for multiple learning paths and control for their learning pace which affect positively students' motivation.
- The development of a supportive and not a threatening learning environment that would penalize failure. An example of a supportive learning environment offers peer learning groups consisted of good and weak students that work together and cooperate in learning and executing joint class projects.
- The clearly communicated course objectives, expectations and learning outcomes.
- The availability of multiple assessment methods incl. adaptive assessment.
- The improvement of teaching effectiveness

The HAHE encourages institutions to design and implement a procedure for dealing with the issue of weak student performance.

- The focus on meeting students' requirements for systematic offering of courses, the possible lack of connection of theory to practice, the lack of guidelines for study matters, such as the preparation of a dissertation report.

The HAHE should ask institutions to officially assure and document the systematic provision of courses in alignment with students' and labour market needs and the necessary resources. Guidelines for studies, internships, mobility, thesis preparation, written assignments should be available. The connection of theory to practice can be achieved in a number of ways such as the implementation of active learning and constructivist learning strategies which allows students to integrate thinking and doing while learning and reflecting. These learning strategies focus on exploration and students' skills development. Experiential learning helps students develop their skills and attain learning outcomes through the knowledge transformation and application process. In addition, internships among other benefits give students the possibilities to investigate how theory can be applied in real work situations.

The HAHE can encourage academic units have a consistent curriculum, engage their staff in training on modern teaching approaches and further increase student participation in their internship program.

- The maintenance of learning resources and infrastructure in good condition.

Bearing in mind the evidence that a positive learning environment impacts academic performance, institutions have the primary responsibility to create and maintain it.

The HAHE can ask institutions to develop and implement a process for monitoring and maintaining resources and infrastructure in good condition.

- The development of permanent alumni and external stakeholders' communication mechanisms for utilizing their views on the study program.

Universities have various stakeholders (e.g. state, alumni, employers, competitors, current students, Council) from which they can collect data regarding the effectiveness of the educational process. In those cases in which there seems to be a lack of a systematic mechanism for engaging alumni and stakeholders in the design of study programs, it is suggested that higher education institutions should design and implement a process for obtaining their recommendations and critiques so as to improve the quality of study programs.

The HAHE should send to higher education institutions guidelines for organizing participatory approaches in curriculum development, sharing quality assurance materials with their stakeholders, and developing a structured and systematic procedure to collect data (e.g. use of questionnaires) related to stakeholders views.

- The improvement of methodology, collection, data analysis and use of information systems, and the utilization of information in curriculum improvement processes and decision making.

A quality oriented higher education institution operates based on the quality principles. One of these principles is evidence based decision making which presupposes the development and operation of relevant information systems. Academic analytics combine data, statistical analysis and predictive models to guide decision making from institutional to student level issues.

The HAHE should make clear to institutions that quality is not the result of anecdotal or intuitive decision making. Quality is the logical outcome of thinking and acting based on data and facts. Hence, HAHE not only supports relevant methodologies and the use of academic analytics for decision making but also it emphatically embraces the idea of information systems integration and their interconnections with the National Information System for Quality Assurance.

The HAHE is responsible for coordinating a new NSRF project for the development of national graduate tracking system based on the European experience that will allow for the better alignment of study programmes with the

needs of the labour market, skills and employment forecasting. This initiative will also improve the reliability of graduate data submitted by HEIs in NISQA and the valuation of learning outcomes.

- The provision of systematic information to students about the results of courses` assessment and teaching staff.

A quality culture in a higher education institution is evident by its students` involvement in quality assurance processes. Students are mature enough to understand the significance of quality for their studies and value of their degree and participate in course and teaching staff assessment. Their eagerness to participate in evaluation activities is amplified when they receive feedback about how their views, comments and suggestions are used by the institution.

The HAHE should encourage institutions that are low in quality maturity levels to cultivate quality in their students and attract their interest for participating in course assessments and institutional quality assurance initiatives. Moreover, institutions should document the use of student assessment results for quality improvement.

- The assurance of quality in managing and developing academic staff

Most weaknesses relate to the inadequate number of staff, issues of staff support and development and the lack of an annual assessment review system of academic staff.

The HAHE should encourage institutions to design and implement processes for the continuous development of their academic staff and systematic provision of support for young academic staff members (e.g. mentoring) and/or staff members whose performance is weak. This can be facilitated by specialized teaching support offices which have already been established in a few universities.

9.5.ESG Standard 3.5 Resources

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

9.5.1.Infrastructure and technology

The HAHE has its headquarters in the centre of Athens (Aristeidou 1 & Evripidou, Str). It takes up 4 floors with offices, a conference room and a computer room in a 7 floor building.

The HAHE currently has at its disposal desktop and laptop computers, printers, monitors, projector, servers, etc. In addition, in 2015, the HQA developed the "OPESP" (National Information System for Quality Assurance-NISQA) which is structured into five (5) subsystems: (a) Higher Education Quality Data, (b) Business Intelligence (BI), (c) Independent Experts` Registry d) Accreditation Management and (e) Internal Operation. From 2015 to 2020, the NISQA has been significantly evolved after taking into consideration comments and suggestions made by the QAUs. Currently, the NISQA:

- Collects quantitative data annually (883 data fields: Institution 245, Department 187, Undergraduate Study Program 185, Postgraduate Study Program 71 and Ph.D. program 44) from all HEIs of the country for each academic/calendar year
- Calculates 264 KPI's through the BI platform: Institution (131), Department (55), Undergraduate Study Program (51), Postgraduate Study Program (18) and Ph.D. Program (9).
- Is accessible to any Institution through its QAU, which has full responsibility for the collection and submission of data. Each QAU has NISQA management rights and the ability to create internal users for the academic quality assurance units (OMEA). Currently, HAHE collaborates with the Institutions and

supports around 1,200 users, answers questions (about 1,200 to date) to clarify the definition and significance of the data, and publishes related reports.

- Produces a detailed and concise overview of Institutions, Departments and study programs for all HEIs in the country (through KPI's indicators performed by BI system), used in studies, the HAHEs annual quality report, the development of a Quality Assurance Strategy, the proposal for a national strategy on higher education, expert training, etc.
- Provides QAUs with structured reports to facilitate the Institutional quality planning, the IQAS monitoring and the preparation of internal evaluation reports and more generally to support decision-making in HEIs.
- Provides structured reports to the Accreditation Panels for their information during the external evaluation process.
- Enables the management of the experts` registry

9.5.2. Human resources

The General Director (Article 18 of Law 4653/2020) is responsible for the management and operation of the Authority. More specifically among his/her responsibilities are the coordination and guidance of the scientific and administrative staff and the Authority`s units in implementing the HAHEs guidelines, decisions and other acts. In addition, he/she is the administrative and disciplinary supervisor of the specialized scientific and administrative staff.

The statutory administrative and scientific support job posts for the Authority amount to 45 (blue colour). The under-staffing of the HAHE is a problem associated with both budgetary constraints and ineffective staffing and transfer procedures due to the lack of appropriate provisions for their implementation. Overall, despite the adversity, the HAHE has marginally increased its staffing capacity (red colour) from 2015 to 2020 (Figure 4). In addition, the HAHE employs external associates through the NSRF to implement specific work packages. Their number rose from 14 individuals in 2014 to 29 in 2015 and then is steadily below 10.

In 2018, as the workload of all Departments increased sharply due to the launch of accreditations, the training of staff in subjects directly related to the Authority's existing responsibilities was slightly limited, given the small number of staff. There have been trainings and seminars in the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government and other bodies.

The HAHE staff is highly qualified. Specifically, 11% of staff hold a doctorate and 18% currently study for a Ph.D. degree, 46% hold a master's degree (18% as acquired 2 or more master`s degrees), and only 7% of the staff hold a bachelor`s degree.

9.5.3. Financial resources

The Authority is financed through i. the Regular Budget, the appropriations of which are entered under the same body in the budget of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs; and ii. the NSRF Program "Education & Lifelong Learning".

Regular Budget

As appears in Table 5, from 2015 until 2017 the Authority's budget presented an average year-over-year increase by 37.18%, even though the situation between 2010 and 2015 has been worse, characterized by a decline of 45%. The Regular Budget for 2019 (before the change in the legal framework of the Authority in 2020) increased by 8,7% in comparison with the previous year (2018).

Table 4 : HAHE Regular Budget 2010-2019

HAHE REGULAR BUDGET		2019	2018	2017	2016
0000	Service Provision	667.570,94 €	647.633,41 €	662.278,06 €	517.205,80 €
	0200 Personnel Costs (administrative staff)	545.411,55 €	512.714,18 €	507.325,91 €	378.264,20 €
	0300 Special personnel costs (president, Council member, Director General)	52.393,97 €	47.740,72 €	48.884,64 €	47.425,90 €
	0500 Additional services (insurance and other contributions)	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €
	0700 Travel expenses	19.684,78 €	8.547,25 €	8.596,49 €	7.736,30 €
	0800 Other services	50.080,64 €	78.631,26 €	97.471,02 €	83.779,40 €
1000	Property and equipment supplies	41.651,21 €	4.847,74 €	20.744,22 €	21.108,30 €
	TOTAL	709.222,15 €	652.481,15 €	683.022,28 €	538.314,10 €

2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
344.660,00 €	449.100,00 €	487.811,00 €	316.600,00 €	620.026,00 €	621.517,95 €
290.940,00 €	221.370,00 €	68.685,00 €	5.100,00 €	111.685,00 €	77.114,59 €
44.520,00 €	226.236,00 €	417.705,00 €	311.000,00 €	503.340,00 €	534.860,00 €
0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €
1.800,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	70,00 €	2.720,00 €	7.172,72 €
7.400,00 €	1.494,00 €	1.421,00 €	430,00 €	2.281,00 €	2.370,64 €
6.780,00 €	26.402,00 €	6.841,00 €	0,00 €	807,00 €	18.447,47 €
351.440,00 €	475.502,00 €	494.652,00 €	316.600,00 €	620.833,00 €	639.965,42 €

In 2020, the Authority saw a marginal increase in its Regular Budget. Due to a change in the description and presentation of costs and expenses, the data for 2020 appear on Table 6.

Table 5 : HAHE Regular Budget 2020

Expenses` Description	2020
Personnel	718.225,98 €
Goods and services	133.339,89 €
Machinery and equipment	781,20 €
TOTAL	852.347,07 €

NSRF 2014 – 2020

The financial data for 2020 of the Subproject (A / A 1) "Implementation of the Quality Assurance System in Higher Education Institutions" of the Act "Supporting the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency in Higher Education (HQA) - New Phase" under Code 5010714 which is part of the Operational Program "Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning 2014-2020" are presented in the table below.

Table 6: Financial data NSRF 2020

FINANCIAL DATA NSRF 2020 (01/01/2020 to 31/12/2020)					
“Supporting the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency in Higher Education (HQA) - New Phase” under Code 5010714 - Operational Program “Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning 2014-2020”					
Project Budget	Revenues	Balance	Expenses	Payments	Payments Balance
€4.596.103,00	€685.479,54	€3.037.667,66	€483.690,74	€594.473,46	€108.111,56
Utilization Data					
Cost Percentage (Expenses/Budget)	Potential Utilization Percentage (Expenses/ Revenues)		Utilization Percentage (Payments/ Revenues)		
10,52%	70,52%		86,72%		

9.5.4. Intangible resources

The intangible resources of the HAHE include data, information, knowledge, experience, skills and talents of staff, values and reputation.

The HAHE has developed a strong internal knowledge system built around knowledge acquisition, storage, dissemination and utilization/application that enables greater efficiency and effectiveness in the Authority’s operation. The system is supported through the relevant procedures, culture, technology, leadership and management philosophy of the Authority. Knowledge acquisition is achieved at both the individual and the organizational level. The HAHE undertakes initiatives for training its staff on subjects pertinent to the Authority’s operation and motivates its staff to apply new knowledge, thus achieving the transformation of tacit to explicit knowledge with immediate effects. In addition, the HAHE at the organizational level acquires knowledge by using data from its quality assurance activities and its partnerships with other quality assurance agencies and actors and leveraging it in its processes and operation. Knowledge storage is achieved through the Authority’s network file system, quality assurance databases, emails and website. Knowledge diffusion/dissemination is achieved internally through regular staff meetings, provision of guidelines to staff, staff suggestion schemes, collaboration and team projects and externally through the HAHE website. The HAHE website is a widely known node of information regarding quality in the Greek higher education. It provides comprehensive information about the HAHE (mission, vision, objectives, history, structure etc.), its quality assurance activities and results, its studies and reports, its Registry of Experts and National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and news/announcements. The HAHE has developed a process for its regular updating. The application of knowledge is achieved through staff decisions and the execution of tasks under direction and relevant routines that guide behaviour.

The HAHE places great importance in the experience, skills and talents of its staff. It follows a proactive strategy that enables it to address the changing needs of institutions and the sector of higher education in Greece. In particular, it systematically identifies staff competences (crucial for the achievement of strategic goals) for further development, reallocates talents on project teams on an ad hoc basis and offers its employees a supportive work context.

Finally, the HAHE protects and builds on its reputation. More specifically, the Authority is fully committed to excellence in service provision (quality assurance services to institutions of higher education), pursues systematic feedback, responds immediately to inquiries, operates aligned with its code of conduct, provides a constantly evolving working environment for its staff and communicates regularly with the public.

Studies

From 2015 to 2020 the HAHE has conducted the following studies:

- Study of the published study guides and course syllabi (28.096) from undergraduate study programs of all 36 institutions of the country.
- Study of the European dimension of study programs by field of study. The HAHE has aligned the National System of Undergraduate Programs with the European System as developed in the framework of the European project “Tuning Educational Structures in Europe”.
- Study of programs studies that lead to regulated professions.
- Study entitled “Quality and Innovation Practices for the Promotion of Higher Education Centres of Excellence” aimed at clarifying the key concepts of excellence and presenting good practices that can contribute in the emergence of Higher Education Excellence Centres by taking into account international experience.
- Study entitled “Cost and Funding in Greek HEIs” aimed at formulating the principles of funding and costing of HEIs operation, with the aim of utilizing data from the State and institutions.

9.5.5. Working environment

The HAHE is committed to the development and continuous improvement of a positive, healthy, safe and modern working environment for its staff. It is a deeply held belief that a positive working environment impacts employee satisfaction and involvement with work. Hence, the Authority encourages open communication and collaboration among its staff members, respects work-life balance and diversity, facilitates training and development of its staff, recognizes success and learns from failure. It moreover monitors and systematically assesses the quality of tangible and intangible elements in its working environment, identifies areas for improvement and makes changes wherever necessary.

The Authority considers understaffing and inadequate funding as serious impediments in the process of carrying out its mission and strategy. Hence, it addresses the necessity of adequacy and suitability of resources (especially staffing and funding) in its strategy, as it results from the process of SWOT analysis (please see section 14 of the report, SO strategies, point 4).

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.

The Internal Quality Assurance System is based on processes and procedures that correspond to the ESG standards and constitute the HAHE quality manual. The Quality Manual includes the Authority’s Quality Policy (see below), processes and procedures. The Quality Manual is based on the Accreditation Guide (sent to institutions and stakeholders and published on the Authority’s website) and is further enriched with internal procedures and corresponding workflow charts. It is accompanied by the HAHE legal framework, the ministerial decisions for experts’ mobility, the NSRF technical report and is specialized in ISO procedures where required. The Authority addresses the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance activities in its strategy (please see 14th section, a) OW strategies, points 1 and 2 and b) SO strategies, point 1). The HAHE plans to intensify its efforts to develop its own and institutional quality culture, improve internal quality assurance and internalize operational rules that promote its vision, mission, and values of quality. Such rules and procedures may refer to a) the development and implementation of the HAHE's communication strategy, b) the establishment of operational rules for the Council (explicit roles, rights, and obligations of the members) and c) the development and implementation of an internal staff training program on quality management.

The HAHE implements a procedure for the annual monitoring of its internal quality assurance, policy and strategy by the Agency's Board after taking into consideration feedback and meta evaluation results from the institutions, the external experts (through questionnaires and official correspondence) and evidence already recorded in the Authority's management information system. Further improvements can be made, following conclusions from IQAS and study programmes accreditations. The HAHE internal quality assurance is reviewed once a year based on the findings of the Institutions' external quality assurance. A comprehensive in-depth analysis is performed, international and European data are collected and analysed, improvements are identified and annual objectives are set.

The HAHE ensures the integrity of the quality assurance procedures. It has established a code of ethics (section 10.4.3), which includes three main axes: transparency, discretion and confidentiality which assures that staff, experts and collaborators work and behave professionally and ethically. In addition, the Authority makes efforts to improve the gender balance of experts, filed in its Registry and their training.

As mentioned earlier, the HAHE is responsible for preparing and publishing an annual report which presents current developments in the field of higher education globally with a focus on Greece and it provides readers with a complete overview of the Authority's quality assurance activities and results. The report is submitted to the President of the Hellenic Parliament and the Standing Committee on Educational Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament.

All HAHE activities are organized and executed in house. However, if subcontractors are employed in the future, they will be bound by contract, monitored and systematically evaluated.

The Authority establishes the status and recognition of the institutions and study programmes that receive the HAHE accreditation badge.

9.6.1. Quality Policy

The Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) has the mission of ensuring high quality in higher education.

To carry out its mission and achieve its goals, HAHE implements a specific Quality Policy, summarized as follows:

HAHE is committed in creating and maintaining an internal quality assurance system and the availability of the necessary resources as well as the implementation of the necessary measures to achieve the promotion of its mission and vision for the high quality of Higher Education, as specified in its strategic plan.

The purpose of the internal quality assurance system of HAHE is the design, organization, implementation, monitoring, and improvement of standards, procedures, criteria, and indicators suitable for the accreditation of the quality of Internal Quality Assurance Systems and the Study Programs of the country's universities.

The standards, procedures, and criteria issued by HAHE are in line with national legislation and the European Standards and Guidelines of the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

HAHE monitors and improves the quality of its operations through commonly defined processes, procedures, and systems included in the relevant quality manual. The quality manual includes the following 10 processes: quality policy, resource management, quality targeting, template development and revision, external quality assurance organization, measurement, analysis and improvement, communication with institutions, disclosure of information, progress monitoring activities and continuous improvement, organization of external quality assurance, and the certification of HAHE.

HAHE collects and analyses data and information from the implementation of quality assurance activities in universities, based on which it may proceed to systemic decisions that improve standards, criteria, and procedures.

The goals set in its strategic plan, as well as within its action plan, are a point of reference for all the Authority's operations. In addition, the Authority sets measurable and objective goals for quality. These objectives are established and evaluated in terms of their degree of achievement in the context of the review of the internal quality assurance system.

As part of its systemic review, the Authority is constantly reviewing and improving the features of its services, as much as possible, as well as the effectiveness of the relevant processes.

The members of the Supreme Council, the Evaluation and Accreditation Council, as well as the Scientific and Administrative Service contribute in the achievement of the Authority's objectives and are responsible for the performance and results of their work.

HAHE guarantees the transparency of all its activities by establishing accounting mechanisms, the adoption of the Code of Conduct, and the development of a culture of quality.

HAHE is subject to periodic external evaluation every five years, in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines of the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015). This evaluation decides its subsequent retainment of ENQA membership status and its inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The above quality policy is communicated and considered known to all interested parties and is practiced by all the Authority's staff.

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 2015, the HQA underwent an external evaluation coordinated by ENQA and found to be in compliance with the ESG. As the HQA was, so is the newly founded Hellenic Authority for Higher Education fully committed to systematically reflecting on its performance results and learning in alignment with quality principles. Based on the recommendations made by the External Evaluation Panel members, the HAHE proceeded in changes and improvements. The tables included in Annex IV provide a comparison of standards between ESG 2005 and ESG 2015, the panel report's findings and recommendations, as well as an overview of the changes and improvements achieved. All changes and improvements appear also in Chapter 12 of this report.

10. Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (External quality assurance- HEI-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.

A fundamental constituent of the HAHE mission and strategy is the support of higher education institutions in Greece for implementing quality assurance and embracing a mentality of excellence. To achieve that the HAHE developed four accreditation standards (Internal Quality Assurance System, Undergraduate Study Programme, Foreign Language Study Programme, New Study Programme) in alignment with the ESG 2015. The HAHE Standard for IQAS Accreditation focuses on the "hard" quality practices such as strategic planning and quality goalsetting, managing resources and processes for internal and external evaluation while the equivalent Standards for Study

Programmes' accreditation presents a clearer orientation towards the "soft" quality elements in the higher education context, such as offering greater value to students and graduates, their skills, abilities and student-centred learning. It is true that the effectiveness of the "soft" quality elements presupposes "hard" quality practices. Hence, the overall quality performance results from the implementation of both standards by institutions. These standards were communicated to higher education institutions and constituted their guide in the path toward quality accreditation. Thus, during the second phase of quality assurance which aims at the identification of its results, higher education institutions submitted their accreditation proposals following a public call.

The HAHE has addressed all the standards of internal quality assurance as included in ESG Part 1. The link of internal and external quality assurance is assured through the communication and feedback process with the HEIs, the public availability of all QA standards, communications, forms, and templates, as well as the periodical reassessment of quality effectiveness. The framework supporting the link between internal and external quality assurance is illustrated in Table 10 (Annex VII). More specifically:

1. **ESG 1.1 Policy for quality assurance** is addressed within the HAHE IQAS and SP Standards. The quality assurance policy is the guiding document which sets the operating principles of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), the principles for the continuous improvement of the Institution, as well as the Institution's obligation for public accountability. It supports the development of quality culture, according to which, all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance. This policy has a formal status and should be publicly available.

- **In the HAHE IQAS standard**, institutions a) should apply a quality assurance policy as part of their strategic management. This policy should be developed and adjusted according to the institutions' areas of activity. It should also be made public and implemented by all parties involved (Principle 1), b) should have clear and explicit goals regarding the assurance and continuous upgrade of the quality of the offered programmes, the research and innovation activities, as well as the scientific and administrative services. These goals may be qualitative or quantitative and reflect the institutional strategy (Principle 3) and c) set up and establish an internal quality assurance system, which includes processes and procedures covering all areas of academic activities and functions. Special focus is given on the quality of teaching and learning, including the learning environment, research, innovation and governance (Principle 4).
- **In the HAHE USP standard**, institutions should apply a quality assurance policy as part of their strategic management. This policy should expand and be aimed (with the collaboration of external stakeholders) at all institution's areas of activity, and particularly at the fulfilment of quality requirements of undergraduate programmes. This policy should be published and implemented by all stakeholders (Principle 1).
- **In the HAHE FLSP Standard** (Principle 1), it is stated that institutions and academic units should have in place an appropriate strategy for the establishment and provision of foreign language programmes (FLP). This strategy should address any special needs in terms of infrastructure, services, human resources, procedures, financial resources, and administrative systems. In this strategy, the Institutions and the academic units should anticipate the potential benefits, weaknesses, opportunities, and/or risks from their implementation and plan all the necessary actions to achieve their goals. In addition academic units should draft and implement a quality assurance policy, arising from their strategy and specialized for the specific FLP domain, that is accompanied by annual quality assurance targets, for continuous improvement (Principle 2).
- **In the HAHE NSP Standard**, (Principle 1.1), institutions should have formulated a suitable strategy to underpin the establishment and operation of new academic units and the provision of new study programmes. This strategy should be documented by feasibility and sustainability studies.
- Moreover, institutions should have established an accredited IQAS and implement a quality policy as part their strategy, focused on the operation of new academic units and study programmes and complemented by an annual quality goal-setting aiming at their continuous development and improvement.

2. Academic units should develop their programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the objectives, the subject areas, the structure and organisation, the expected

learning outcomes and the intended professional qualifications according to the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education should be described. The approval or revision process for programmes includes a check of compliance with the basic requirements described in the Standards, on behalf of the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU). **ESG 1.2 Design and approval of programmes** is addressed within the HAHE USP Standard according to which institutions should develop their undergraduate programmes following a defined written process which will involve the participants, information sources and the approval committees for the programme. The objectives, the expected learning outcomes, the intended professional qualifications and the ways to achieve them are set out in the programme design. The above details as well as information on the programme's structure are published in the student guide (Principle 2). In the case of the HAHE IQAS Standard, this process is examined under Principle 5, which refers to the self-assessment process of institutions. In addition in the case of **Foreign Language Study Programmes**, academic units should develop their foreign language programmes following a defined written process which will involve the participants, information sources, and the approval committees for the programme. The objectives, the expected learning outcomes, the intended professional qualifications, and the ways to achieve them are set out in the FLP design. The above details as well as information on the programme's structure are published in the student guide (Principle 3). Finally, institutions should design **new SPs** based on a specific written process outlining participants, sources of information to be utilized, and approval committees. In the design of NSP, the goals, intended learning outcomes, professional qualifications and ways to attain them should be identified. This information as well as the structure of the NSP are included and published in their Study Guides (Principle 2.2).

3. Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. The above entail continuous consideration of the programme's delivery and the assessment of the related outcomes. **ESG 1.3 Student centered learning, teaching and assessment** is addressed within the HAHE SP Standard according to which institutions should ensure that the undergraduate programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process. The assessment methods should reflect this approach (Principle 3). In the case of the HAHE IQAS Standard, this process is examined under Principle 5 which refers to the self-assessment process of institutions. Likewise, in the case of Foreign Language Study Programmes, academic units should ensure that the foreign language programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process. The assessment methods should reflect this approach (Principle 4). Finally, ESG 1.3 is addressed with the HAHE NSP Standard according to which institutions will have to make sure that NSPs provide all necessary preconditions to their students to encourage them undertake an active role during the learning process. All student assessment methods should follow this direction (Principle 2.3).

4. Institutions and academic units need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, manage and act on information regarding student progression. In addition, all procedures concerning the award and recognition of higher education degrees, the duration of studies, rules ensuring students progression, terms and conditions for student mobility should be based on the institutional study regulations. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed (Diploma Supplement). **ESG 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification** is addressed within a) the HAHE USP Standard according to which institutions should develop and apply published regulations covering all aspects and phases of studies (admission, progression, recognition and certification) (Principle 4), b) the HAHE FLSP Standard according to which academic units should develop and apply published regulations covering all aspects and phases of studies (admission, progression, recognition of studies, and degree award) (Principle 5) and c) the HAHE NSP Standard according to which institutions are expected to have regulations for all aspects and study phases (admission, progression, recognition and certification) (Principle 2.4). In the case of the HAHE IQAS Standard, this process is examined under Principle 5 which refers to the self-assessment process of institutions.

5. The Institutions and their academic units have a major responsibility as to the standard of their teaching staff providing them with a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of their scientific work. **ESG 1.5 Teaching staff** is addressed within the HAHE SP (Principle 5), FLSP (Principle 6) and NSP Standard (Principle 2.5)

according to which institutions/academic units should assure themselves of the qualifications and competence of the teaching staff. Moreover, they should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff. In the case of the HAHE IQAS Standard, this process is examined under Principle 5 which refers to the self-assessment process of institutions.

6. Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient funding and means to support learning and academic activity in general, so that they can offer to students the best possible level of studies. **ESG 1.6 Learning resources and student support** is addressed within the HAHE IQAS and SP/FLSP/NSP Standards.

- In the case of the HAHE IQAS Standard institutions should ensure appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities, research, and academic activities in general. Relevant regulations should be in place to assure that adequate infrastructure and services for teaching and research are available and readily accessible (Principle 2).
- In the HAHE USP (Principle 6), FLSP Standard (Principle 7) and NSP Standard (Principle 2.6), institutions /academic units should have adequate funding to cover teaching and learning needs. They should –on the one hand- provide satisfactory infrastructure and services for learning and student support and–on the other hand- facilitate direct access to them by establishing internal rules to this end.

7. The QAU should establish and operate an information system to manage the data required for the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System. The QAU measures and monitors the performance of the various activities of the Institution, through appropriate procedures established in the context of the IQAS structure, and assesses their level of effectiveness. The measuring and monitoring is conducted on a basis of indices and data provided by HAHE in the pertinent guidelines and forms, which are part of the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NISQA). This sort of information is used by the Institution for decision making, at all levels, pursuing improvement, as well as for setting, monitoring, assessing and reviewing the Institution's strategic and operational goals. **ESG 1.7 Information management** is addressed within the HAHE IQAS and USP/FLSP/NSP Standards.

- In the case of the HAHE IQAS Standard institutions are fully responsible for the collection, analysis and use of information in an integrated, functional and readily accessible manner, aiming at the effective management of the quality data related to teaching, research and other academic activities, as well of those related to the administration (Principle 6).
- In the HAHE USP Standard (Principle 7), FLSP (Principle 8), and NSP Standard (Principle 2.7), institutions / academic units bear full responsibility for collecting, analyzing and using information, aimed at the efficient management of undergraduate programmes of study and related activities, in an integrated, effective and easily accessible way.

8. The QAU publishes data related to IQAS structure, organization and operation. Furthermore, the QAU publishes data pertinent to the institutional quality policy and objectives, as well as information and data relevant to the Institution's internal and external evaluation. In the context of the self-assessment process, the QAU verifies that adequate information regarding the teaching activities and, particularly, the programmes' profile and the overall institutional activity is publicly available. QAU makes recommendations for improvement, where appropriate. Information on Institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders and the public. **ESG 1.8 Public information** is addressed within the HAHE IQAS and SP Standards.

- In the case of the HAHE IQAS Standard, institutions should publish information about their teaching and academic activities in a direct and accessible manner. All pertinent information should be up-to-date, clear and objective (Principle 7).
- In the HAHE USP Standard (Principle 8), FLSP (Principle 9), NSP Standard (Principle 2.8), institutions/academic units should publish information about their teaching and academic activities which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.

9. The QAU conducts, on an annual basis, a self-assessment of the IQAS, following the written procedure provided for each area of activity, which is implemented by a certain academic or administrative unit, as appropriate. The procedure determines the timing, the participants, the data under consideration, and the expected outcomes. The self-assessment aims at a final estimation of the suitability of the IQAS in force, as well as at basing decisions

concerning the necessary remedial or precautionary actions for improvement. The outcomes of the self-assessment are recorded in internal reports drawn by the QAU. The reports identify any areas of deviation or non-compliance with the Standards, and are communicated to the interested parties (if appropriate). Study programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published. Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to maintain the level of educational provision and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students. **ESG 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes** is addressed within the HAHE IQAS and USP, FLSP, NSP Standards.

- In the case of the HAHE IQAS Standard the internal quality assurance system comprises procedures providing the implementation of the annual self-assessment of the institution's academic and administrative units, addressing areas of oversights or shortcomings, and defining remedial actions towards the achievement of the set goals, and eventual improvement (Principle 5).
- In the case of HAHE USP Standard (Principle 9), FLSP (Principle 10) and NSP (Principle 2.9) institutions should have in place an internal quality assurance system for the audit and annual internal review of their programmes, so as to achieve the objectives set for them, through monitoring and amendments, with a view to continuous improvement. Any actions taken in the above context should be communicated to all parties concerned.

10. External quality assurance, may act as a means of verification of the effectiveness of the Institution's internal quality assurance, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives. Additionally, it can provide information with a view to public acknowledgement of the positive course of the Institution's activities. The Higher Education Institutions engage in periodic external quality assurance which is conducted taking into consideration any special requirements set by the legislation governing the operation of the Institutions and their academic units. Moreover, the HAHE is responsible for administrating the programme accreditation process which is realized as an external evaluation procedure, and implemented by a committee of independent experts. The accreditation of the quality of the programmes acts as a means of verification of the compliance of the programme with the template's requirements, and as a catalyst for improvement, while opening new perspectives towards the international standing of the awarded degrees. Both academic units and institutions participate in the regular external quality assurance process, while respecting the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate. The quality assurance, in this case the accreditation, is an on-going process that does not end with the external feedback, or report or its follow-up process within the Institution. Therefore, Institutions and their academic units ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one. **ESG 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance** is addressed within the HAHE IQAS and USP, FLSP, NSP Standards.

- In the case of the HAHE IQAS Standard institutions should be periodically evaluated by committees of external experts set by the HAHE, for the purpose of accreditation of their internal quality assurance systems (IQAS). The periodicity of the external evaluation is determined by the HAHE (Principle 8).
- In the case of the HAHE USP (Principle 10), FLSP (Principle 11) and NSP (Principle 2.10) Standards, programmes should regularly undergo evaluation by committees of external experts set by the HAHE, aiming at accreditation. The term of validity of the accreditation is determined by the HAHE.

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.

The HAHE external quality assurance processes are described in chapters 5 and 6 of this report following the presentation of the Authority's mission and objectives outlined in chapter 3. They have been carefully designed

based on: a) general guidelines, as appear in the relevant regulatory framework, b) the Authority's mission and objectives, c) best international practice, d) the changing needs of institutions in a globalized context, and e) consultation with higher education institutions and their stakeholders. These standardized processes have been designed to effectively assure quality in higher education institutions and to be efficiently executed (with minimum workload and cost). The HAHE managed to cut down by 80% the time needed to conduct the external review with the help of the National Information System for Quality Assurance in higher education that was developed in close cooperation with institutions. Detailed guides and documentation were also produced to support institutions within these processes. In addition, the HAHE organized seminars for each institution and preparatory meetings to disseminate the external evaluation results, stress the significance of pursuing improvement and focus on the results of quality assurance, namely quality accreditation. In this way, the Authority achieved the consistent understanding of processes, procedures and responsibilities by higher education institutions. In addition, institutions received guidelines for measuring progress/improvements. The HAHE reviews on an annual basis all improvements made by higher education institutions, which are presented through key performance indicators and follow up reports. It is worth mentioning that higher education institutions have marked considerable progress from 44% to 98% following their external evaluation, a fact that verifies the success of this process and documents its fit for purpose. Through the accreditation process, a number of weaknesses and strengths of HEIs and their study programmes appeared, which further assisted institutions to improve and identify their strategic orientations in a structured and scientifically correct way.

The HAHE follows the PDCA approach in all its operations, namely tests possible solutions to problems, assesses results and implements those solutions that work. As a result of that, the Authority reviews and improves its processes in accordance with feedback provided by institutions and experts, updates its toolkit to further assist higher education institutions in the journey towards excellence and invests in the training and continuous development of its external experts. For instance, the HAHE should continue to support the Institutions by providing guidance, recommendations and organized lectures to the academic community (including Institutional Quality Assurance Units) on generic and specialized quality issues. It additionally plans the identification of criteria and conditions for the maintenance of the Internal Quality Systems accreditations in the context of monitoring the implementation of accreditation recommendations, with the objective of consolidating the institutional role of Institutional Quality Assurance Units, implementing effective strategic management and the quality policy for the Institutions. The HAHE plans to issue a specific guide with recommendations for improving the internal quality assurance of the Institutions, which will seek to remove the weaknesses identified during the accreditation process. These recommendations will be used to revise the standard when re-accrediting Internal Quality Assurance Units and Undergraduate Programmes. These guidelines are included in the HAHE strategy (section 14 of the report, SO strategies, point 3).

Assuring stakeholders' engagement

The HAHE takes great care in the design of the quality assurance processes to ensure their fitness for purpose and the consultation of stakeholders. Stakeholders are invited to express their views on various issues regarding the development and implementation of the HAHE quality assurance activities (process, criteria, documentation etc.), often as panel members. There is also a consistent mechanism in place to gather feedback from interested parties, which is utilized for further enhancing the procedures and process of quality assurance. The aims of quality assurance processes have been developed, following consultations with universities and other actors in alignment with the Authority's mission, objectives and strategy. It is worth pointing out that communications with stakeholders have a significant potential for improvement both in terms of frequency and in terms of diversity/variety. Some events include the meeting (5/11/2019) of the Authority and the respective Agency of Cyprus to discuss issues of common interest, the meeting (12/11/2019) with the President of the Geotechnical Chamber of Greece regarding the alignment of academic qualifications and professional rights of graduates of the sector, the accreditation schedule and the participation of its members in the accreditation process as well as the meeting (13/11/2019) with the Secretary General of the Panhellenic Medical Association and the representative of the Athens Medical Association on issues of medical education and academic qualifications of graduates and the framework

regulating the participation of PMA in the accreditation process of relevant study programmes. In addition, on the 13th of February 2020 a meeting was held between the HAHE President, the General Director and the General Secretary of Higher Education regarding quality accreditation, financing and evaluation data. The Authority places great importance on higher education data; thus it began cooperating with the Hellenic Statistical Authority with the aim of improving national data on higher education (3/11/2020).

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.

10.3.1 The Accreditation Process

Accreditation is a pre-defined, reliable and useful process. Therefore it should be implemented consistently and published. It includes the following steps:

1. Accreditation Proposal of an IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP to be submitted to HAHE by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) of the Institution;
2. Review by a Panel of Independent Experts (Accreditation Panel) including a site visit to the Institution;
3. An Accreditation Report resulting from the accreditation process drafted by the Panel to be submitted to HAHE;
4. Adoption of the accreditation decision by the E&A Council – Publication on the HAHE Website;
5. Consistent follow-up of the IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP operation by the Institution's QAU.

This section provides a short overview of these steps, while a more detailed description of each one can be found in later sections of this guide.

The HAHE accreditation process is initiated by a request from an Institution that wishes to be granted accreditation for a Study/Foreign Language Study Programme or its Internal Quality Assurance System (within a deadline announced in the public call). The accreditation of the IQAS is a presupposition for the accreditation of study programmes of an institution. The Institution should contact HAHE in time to initiate the accreditation process (about 3 months prior to the expected date of the site visit). From this moment onwards, the process is assigned to a HAHE staff member who will act as the accreditation process Coordinator. This person serves as the main contact person for the Institution and the Accreditation Panel throughout the process and will support all those involved during the different stages of the accreditation process.

During the initial phase, HAHE and the Institution agree on the terms of reference of the accreditation process, including the activities to be subjected to the review as well as the overall time-line.

Accreditation Proposal (self-assessment report)

The first main stage of the accreditation process is the production of the IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP Accreditation Proposal by the Institution. In order to be accepted by HAHE, the Proposal shall be drawn up in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Standards and HAHE's guidelines and should cover all indicated elements. Furthermore, in the case of a second or subsequent review, the Institution is also expected to make explicit reference to the recommendations from previous Accreditation Reports, underlining the related developments that have occurred meanwhile.

Review by a Panel of Independent Experts (including a site visit)

HAHE will commission the composed Panel of Independent Experts to carry out the accreditation process. The Evaluation and Accreditation Panel will review all IQAS/SP/FLSP/NSP areas of activity and provide their view on whether it is acting in substantial compliance with the HAHE Standards. The Panel will make a judgement on the operation of the IQAS/SP/FLSP/NSP by conducting a thorough assessment of the Accreditation Proposal, a study of additional material (such as information available on the Institution's website or submitted to the Panel by the Institution upon request), and a site visit to the Institution. The purpose of the site visit is to verify information provided in the Accreditation Proposal and to gain new knowledge about the IQAS/SP/FLSP/NSP under review. It is also an opportunity for the Institution to engage in a constructive discussion and an exchange regarding the activities and development of the IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP in the near future. The duration of the site visit is 2 days. The whole procedure (incl. the drafting of the accreditation report) takes 6 days.

In order to continue the accreditation plan amid COVID 19 the HAHE modified its process and enabled virtual site visits by using relevant digital tools. It published guidelines for conducting accreditation with the help of electronic means. The stages of on-line review are the following:

Stages of the procedure

The review is conducted by the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel (EEAP) with the following modifications:

1. Information of the Institution
 - 1.1 The Institution is informed about the scheduled time period of the accreditation review.
 - 1.2 The Institution submits any additional material to the HAHE. The production of video or relevant digital material for the presentation of the Institutional facilities, classrooms, labs, scientific equipment, etc. is recommended. It is advised that the material is uploaded on the website of the Institution or the Department.
2. Provision of the material prepared by the Institution to the experts
 - 2.1 HAHE sends the material prepared by the Institution, including any additional support material.
3. Organization of the review by the use of electronic means

The review is conducted electronically without any transportation on behalf of the experts. During the conduct of the review by the use of electronic means, the following new conditions apply:

- 3.1 All meetings will take place through a widely used Teleconference Platform (TP) (e.g. Zoom, WebEx etc.). The relevant links for these meetings should be included in the final schedule of the review by the use of electronic means.
- 3.2 The Institution should have the necessary equipment for the teleconference and should be able to offer immediate technical support for the conduct of the review by the use of electronic means. The Institution should be able to provide a suitable room, adequately equipped (with a projector, screen, etc.), to host all participants on behalf of the Institution who wish to be physically present, as deemed appropriate.
- 3.3 The Institution will be responsible for the organization of the meetings and will designate a person to undertake the technical support for the communication between HAHE and EEAP for each review conducted by the use of electronic means. This person will deal with any issues of technical nature that might arise during the meetings. The person responsible for the technical support will also act as the host (the person who invites the participants of the teleconference) of the meetings among the members of the EEAP and the Institution.
- 3.4 The Institution should have the necessary transmission infrastructure (on-line camera) to cover a tour of the campus, or video to cover the tour of the key facilities of the Institution.
- 3.5 The President of the EEAP will act as the host for the meetings of the Panel members.

3.6 Depending on the working timetable, a tour of the website of the Institution or the Department, or a tour of the Institutional facilities via electronic means may take place. This session might include electronic tour of the campus, campus maps, photos of the various venues, etc. However, while investigating compliance to the Standards for Quality Accreditation, the Panel has the right to ask for a focus of the tour on certain facilities (e.g. dormitories, library, points where Quality Policy is demonstrated, the Quality Assurance Office).

3.7 The procedure of the review by the use of electronic means takes into account the provisions on the protection of personal data.

Accreditation Report

Based on the information collected, through documentation of the IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP and the site visit, the Accreditation Panel draws up the IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP draft Accreditation Report using the relevant HAHE template and sends it to HAHE. The Panel's judgement on compliance of the IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP is provided for each criterion separately with the following grading: fully compliant, substantially compliant, partially compliant and non-compliant. Before sending the Report to the Institution for factual corrections, the HAHE Coordinator checks the draft Accreditation Report for completeness, consistency, clarity and language.

After completing the above steps, the Accreditation Panel finalises the Accreditation Report, which is then submitted to HAHE.

Adopting and publishing the HAHE Accreditation Decision

Finally, the E&A Council takes the decision on the IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP accreditation based on the Panel's judgement and the recommendations given in the Accreditation Report which is then notified to the Institution and published on the Internet.

Follow-up report

All Institutions are required to submit a follow-up report at the latest two years after the accreditation decision. The purpose of this report is to engage the Institution in a constant process to assess and enhance the quality of its IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP. The report will address all criteria on which the Panel and/or the E&A Council have made recommendations and describe the steps it has taken or is willing to take in order to address them. In addition, any significant changes or developments in the IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP should be described briefly.

Finally, an optional visit (in case progress can be identified locally) to the Institution is provided for by a group of experts in order to assess the progress that has been made in the IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP two years after the accreditation decision. The visit is usually carried out, whenever possible, by two members of the original Accreditation Panel. The specific objective of the progress visit is to generate a dialogue aimed at further improving the operation of the IQAS/SP. The cost for the site visit is covered by the Authority.

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).

10.4.1 Attracting and selecting experts

The HAHE process and criteria used for the selection of experts and the composition of the external evaluation and accreditation panel are explicitly referred in the Quality Manual. The two possibilities for experts' selection are briefly presented below:

- a) The HAHE announces a call for expression of interest for experts, in which details for registration in the HAHE Registry of experts are included. Following the initial registration of an expert, the HAHE checks for possible errors and omissions. In case there are errors/omissions noted, the HAHE communicates with the experts and informs them respectively. If there are no errors/omissions, applications are forwarded to the HAHE E & A Council which is responsible for acceptance or rejection. Should the application be accepted, the expert is considered active and a registry password is provided. On the occasion that an application is rejected, experts are notified electronically.
- b) The HAHE invites institutions to suggest individuals which they consider suitable for experts. The list of suggestions is received by the HAHE and is carefully checked. On the assumption that the E&A Council accepts these suggestions, experts are notified and sent instructions for registration in the HAHE Registry of experts (thrice). If there is no response from a potential expert, he/she is deleted. Should there be a positive answer, the expert is considered active and is sent further instructions. In case someone responds but is temporarily unavailable, the initial registration in the HAHE registry is maintained but he/she is considered inactive.

The applicants should meet the following criteria by category:

a) For academic staff

- Ph.D. degree
 - Rank of Associate/Full Professor
 - Experience in HEI administration
 - Experience in quality assurance activities (e.g. internal quality assurance system)
- and/or study programme evaluation/accreditation) in higher education

Optional

Teaching and/or research in Total Quality Management

b) For (undergraduate) students

- Being between the 2nd and the last semester of their studies and having not exceeded n+2 years of study
- very good or excellent knowledge of the English language (C1/C2 Levels)

c) For representatives from research/professional bodies

- Membership in recognized research institutions /professional bodies
- Experience in quality assurance activities

Language Proficiency

International experts should be fully proficient in the English language.

All experts are expected to

- have an in-depth knowledge of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education (ESG) 2015* and be familiar with the relevant processes in the European Higher Education Area
- possess analytical, digital and social skills
- comply with the HAHE code of conduct
- abide by the panel work schedule and agreed task division

The HAHE makes efforts for composing evaluation/accreditation panels according to the criteria specified by each quality assurance activity.

10.4.2 Evaluation and Accreditation Panels

The members of the Evaluation and Accreditation Panel are drawn from the HAHE Registry of experts. The selection and appointment of experts for an Evaluation and Accreditation Panel is carried out by the Authority to avoid conflicts of interest and to preserve the integrity of the process.

When appointing experts to an Evaluation and Accreditation Panel, the key requirement is that the members of the Panel should have a sufficient level of knowledge, experience, and expertise to conduct the review to a high standard and be totally independent of the HEI or SP under review. Experts are required to notify the HAHE in writing of any connection with the HEI/SP which could result in a potential conflict of interest.

The Evaluation and Accreditation Panel consists of five (5) members. The detailed task allocation is agreed between the panel chair and the members of the panel. The Panel may include one student member in accordance with ENQA standards. In case of study programmes under accreditation leading to the exercise of legislatively regulated professions, one member of the Panel comes from the relevant professional association or chamber.

In addition, when appointing a Panel, the following selection criteria are applied:

- All Panel members must have been trained by HAHE;
- At least two Panel members come from foreign countries;
- The Panel Chair must come from a foreign country, have previous experience taking part in a HQA/HAHE External Evaluation Committee/ Evaluation and Accreditation Panel and have fluent knowledge of English which is the main working language, and/or of Greek;
- At least one member of the Panel has good knowledge and understanding of higher education in Greece;
- At least two members of the Panel must have fluent knowledge of English;
- Gender balance is taken into consideration to the greatest extent possible;
- No experts who had any kind of cooperation with the HEI/SP under review within the last five years can take part in the Panel;
- Current members of the HAHE Councils are not eligible to become members of the Accreditation Panel.

Regarding the participation of students, the following respective criteria are applied:

- Student status in another Department and University than the one under evaluation. In case of studying for a second degree, the first degree should not come from the Department under accreditation.
- Student status in a similar/corresponding Department (according to the official list of similar/corresponding departments for transfers). In case this is not possible, student should study in a Department in a relevant scientific field.
- The total number of credits in the courses they have been examined with success during the last completed semester of study.

The CV qualifications

The QAU of the reviewed Institution must notify the HAHE in writing of any potential conflict of interest of one or more members of the Panel with the HEI/SP under review. The QAU is also given the opportunity to comment on the selected members of the Evaluation and Accreditation Panel.

The Evaluation and Accreditation Panel must be approved by the HAHE E&A Council. To grant its approval the E&A Council should take into consideration the CVs of all Panel members, and that all selection criteria are met.

After the Accreditation Panel has been established, the HAHE Coordinator notifies the experts of its composition and facilitates contact between the members and the Panel Chair and with the contact person who has been appointed by the QAU of the relevant HEI for the accreditation process of the IQAS/SP.

The IQAS Evaluation and Accreditation Panel consists of five (5) members drawn from the HAHE Registry of Experts. Normally, the invited experts have a managerial, engineering or information technology background, and are experienced in the areas of evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance (in the case of Study Programmes the invited experts have a scientific background relevant to the scientific field of the study programme under review, and are experienced in the areas of evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance). One of the members is assigned (by the HAHE) the specific duties of the Panel Chair. A detailed description of duties and responsibilities is described in the relevant HAHE documents (Guidelines for the Evaluation and Accreditation Panel).

Code of ethics

In addition, based on the HAHE code of ethics, panel members are committed to:

- Act with integrity, objectivity and confidentiality;
- Thoroughly examine the information and background data submitted;
- Take into account the context of the Higher Education Institution;
- Follow the guidelines of HAHE and adhere to the philosophy of quality assurance and continuous improvement;
- Avoid conflicts of interest;
- The members of the Panel should inform HAHE of any association with the host Institution (currently, or during the past five years) and of any scheduled engagement or affiliation, so that their impartiality may not be questioned. Associations which may cause a conflict of interest are, for example, close family relationship, professional or research collaborations with senior members of the Institution, special awards received by the Institution in question, and any other official relationship (HAHE considers each case separately);
- Work closely as a team, under the guidance of the Chair of the Panel and adhere to the defined deadlines;
- Take into consideration that the accreditation process is oriented to improvement, rather than just identifying areas of weakness; it must not be used as means for a potential growth of personal interests. All those who have been members of Accreditation Panels should avoid using information related to the evaluations for financial profit (e.g. by serving as consultants for Higher Education Institutions that they have reviewed), without the permission of HAHE;
- Base their assessments on the evidence gathered;
- Mention in their final report external interferences, if any, which have hindered their work.

The members of the Evaluation and Accreditation Panel are called to accept and sign the Code of Ethics document, to declare their commitment to the HAHE ethics.

It is also noted that the HAHE covers the accommodation and travel expenses for all experts coming from abroad and pays them the amount of 100 Euros per diem.

10.4.3 Training and briefing of experts

a) Training

The HAHE organizes short training sessions aimed at experts interested in becoming members of an Evaluation and Accreditation Panel. Based on the feedback and the experience acquired from the evaluation of HEIs, the training sessions provide experts with the necessary knowledge and guidance on the HAHE Quality Accreditation Standards, the Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and the accreditation process. In addition, the experts are informed during the training sessions about the expectations of the HAHE on the Accreditation Report and the comments submitted by the Panel to the institutions after the completion of the review.

Only experts who have attended the short training session organized by the HAHE may be appointed to an Evaluation and Accreditation Panel. However, attendance of a training does not automatically guarantee an invitation to join a Panel, as this is done on the basis of the needs of each accreditation process (expert profile, nationality, language competences, gender, expertise etc.).

b) Briefing

Prior to the site visit, the HAHE Coordinator provides the Evaluation and Accreditation Panel with the full package of material for the IQAS/particular study programme accreditation review. In addition to the Accreditation Report Template and accompanying documents developed by the HAHE to support the review and the Report drafting, the HAHE also holds a preparatory briefing for the Evaluation and Accreditation Panel. In particular: Approximately two weeks prior to the scheduled site visit, the HAHE conducts either a telephone or teleconference briefing in order to orientate the members of the Evaluation and Accreditation Panel towards the purpose and the key features of the review, to discuss and clarify organisational issues and to answer any questions that may arise.

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.

The HAHE's criteria for decisions regarding IQAS, study programme (undergraduate, foreign language, new) accreditation are prescribed in the relevant legislation, are publicly available on the Authority's website and are presented below, by each type of quality assurance activity:

- [IQAS Accreditation:](#)

The HAHE standard for IQAS accreditation includes the following requirements:

1. Institution policy for quality assurance
2. Provision and management of the necessary resources
3. Establishing goals for quality assurance
4. Structure, organisation and operation of the IQAS
5. Self-assessment
6. Collection of quality data: measuring, analysis and improvement
7. Public information
8. External evaluation and accreditation of IQAS

- [Undergraduate study programme accreditation:](#)

The HAHE standard for undergraduate study programme accreditation includes the following requirements:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality assurance policy 2. Design and approval of programmes 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment 4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification 5. Teaching staff | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Learning resources and student support 7. Information management 8. Public information 9. On-going monitoring and periodic internal review of programmes 10. Regular external evaluation of undergraduate programmes |
|--|---|

- [Foreign Language study programme accreditation:](#)

The HAHE standard for the accreditation of foreign language study programmes includes the following requirements:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic Planning 2. Quality Assurance Policy 3. Design, Approval, and Monitoring of the Quality of Foreign Language Programmes 4. Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment 5. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications, Award of Degrees and Certificates of Qualifications of Foreign Language Programmes 6. Ensuring High Quality of the Teaching Staff of the Foreign Language Programmes | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Learning Resources and Student Support of Foreign Language Programmes 8. Collection, Analysis, and Use of Information for the Organization and Operation of Foreign Language Programmes 9. Public Information Concerning the Foreign Language Programmes 10. Periodic Internal Review of Foreign Language Programmes 11. Regular External Evaluation and Accreditation of Foreign Language Programmes |
|---|--|

- [New study programme accreditation:](#)

The HAHE standard for the quality accreditation of new study programmes (NSP) includes the following requirements:

Part 1: Assessment of the academic unit as per the fulfillment of criteria for the organization of study programmes of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd study cycle

1.2 Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit

Part 2: Evaluation and accreditation of the NSP

2.1 Quality policy

2.2 Design, approval and monitoring of quality of NSP

2.3 Student centered learning in teaching and assessment

2.4 Student admission, recognition of academic qualifications and awards of degrees and certificates of skills of NSP

2.5 Ensuring the adequacy and high quality of the teaching staff of the NSP

2.6 Learning resources and student support of NSP

2.7 Collection, analysis and use of information for the organization and operation of NSP

2.8 Public information concerning the NSP

2.9 Periodic internal review of NSP

2.10 Regular external evaluation and assessment of NSP

The degree of compliance of the IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP is in the opinion of the Panel with each criterion¹⁴:

- *Fully compliant*: The IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP is entirely in accordance with the accreditation criterion which is implemented in an effective manner.
- *Substantially compliant*: The IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP is to a large extent in accordance with the accreditation criterion, the principle/spirit of which is followed in practice.
- *Partially compliant*: Some aspects or parts of the criterion are met while others are not. The interpretation of the criterion is correct, but the manner of implementation is not effective enough.
- *Non-compliant*: The IQAS/USP/FLSP/NSP fails to comply with this criterion.

The overall panel judgment is based on a comprehensive analysis of evidence (e.g. documents/reports, legislation, interviews) and reflects the degree of compliance of each evaluated academic unit with each standard. It is pertinent to point out that the HAHE ensures transparency and consistent execution of each quality assurance process. This is achieved, for example through a) the assignment of a qualified staff as coordinator for each evaluation/accreditation process, b) the preparation of templates to facilitate the consideration of all items of the standards, c) the E & A Council's final decision, which checks the validity of the process and the application of criteria, d) the organization of training sessions for panel members and higher education institutions. By doing so, the HAHE ensures that all parties involved in its quality assurance activities have a common understanding of its perspective.

Communication of criteria

The HAHE follows a consistent plan for communicating the criteria set for its quality assurance activities. All criteria are predefined and published on the Authority's website. In addition, the HAHE organizes regular meetings and workshops to familiarize institutions and their Quality Assurance Units with quality criteria, provides individual guidance upon request and informs institutions about the procedure to be followed before the commencement of each quality assurance activity. Panel experts have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the accreditation criteria through training and briefing sessions organized by the Authority (section 10.4.4 of the report).

Consistent application of criteria

The consistent application of criteria is facilitated through the publication of HAHE guides.

The draft accreditation report prepared by the external evaluation and accreditation panel is submitted to the HAHE for review. In case there are errors/omissions noted¹⁵, the report is sent back to the experts. The final version, after being quality assured by the Quality Assurance Directorate, is forwarded to the academic unit. In addition, the E&A Council is the responsible body for accepting or rejecting panels' judgement and thus granting accreditation status. The Council validates the correct implementation of the accreditation process and the application of criteria.

The ultimate aim of the HAHE is the strengthening of quality culture in higher education institutions of the country. Building on the outcomes and progress noted from institutional external evaluation some years ago, quality accreditation follows the same developmental approach (through panels' recommendations) designed to encourage institutions increase their quality maturity level.

¹⁴ The HAHE Accreditation Guide, Available at https://www.ethaae.gr/images/articles/701-odigos_pistopoiisis_en.pdf

¹⁵ Some examples include omission of overall panel judgement, vague conclusions, possible misaligned documentation and standard requirement.

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.

Accreditation reporting

For the sake of both completeness and accuracy, it is important that the Accreditation Report is drafted throughout the process rather than solely after the site visit. Several of the sections may be written in an outline form before the site visit takes place, based on the IQAS/USP/FLSP material and other information available to the Accreditation Panel during the review. It is further advised to add notes to the draft Report during the course of the site visit, building on the outcomes of the meetings and further scrutiny of documentary evidence. The Panel decides whether each member will contribute in the drafting of the Report. In any case, all Panel members should carefully read and comment on the draft Accreditation Report.

The accreditation reports are drafted in English in accordance with the HAHE template and the mapping grid (normally around 25 pages in length-excluding annexes). They are divided into 3 parts, namely: a) background and context of the review, b) compliance with the principles and c) conclusions. The first part includes general information concerning the accreditation panel, the review procedure and documentation and a description of the institutional profile. The second part addresses the degree of compliance with each principle of the HAHE accreditation standard and the third part consists of features of good practice, areas of weakness, and recommendations for follow up action, followed by a summary and overall assessment of the panel. An accreditation report is expected to constitute a coherent text, based on evidence and not a simple lumping of individual views. Furthermore, it should be written in a clear and plain language with no contradictions.

After the Panel members reach an agreement on the final version of the draft Report, this is finalized and submitted to HAHE. The HAHE Coordinator checks that the draft Report is in line with the HAHE relevant Standards and sends it to the Institution without the Panel's final judgement. The Institution is given two weeks to read the Report and to comment on factual accuracy and any possible grave misunderstandings. At this stage the Institution's QAU should not submit any additional material or documentation. The HAHE Coordinator, after receiving the Institution's comment on the draft Report, will send it to the Panel. Subsequently, the Panel Chair reviews the Institution's comments, drafts the final Report and sends it to HAHE.

All external evaluation/accreditation reports and relevant decisions (including negative reports & decisions) are published on the HAHE website <https://www.ethaae.gr/en/>

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.

The HAHE constitutes a provider of quality assurance services to higher education institutions. Services are indeed complex processes in which there is a high degree of people involvement, something that makes mistakes and oversights inevitable. Potential problems might relate to the process itself as well as the receiver of services with negative consequences (e.g. delays). Service organizations oriented towards excellence should have in place an effective service recovery and complaint management system. The Authority distinguishes between recovery, complaints and appeals. Hence, it is committed in immediate action taking in cases of errors and problems, before and/or after a service recipient leaves the service system. First and foremost, the HAHE behaves proactively and

regularly asks for feedback from institutions (service recipients) regarding possible weaknesses and overall quality level of the provided services. By doing this, the Authority is able to quickly identify problematic areas and improve. However, complaints may arise and come not only from higher education institutions but also from its stakeholders. In order to be able to effectively address potential complaints, the HAHE has designed and implements a systematic process for resolving them. The complaint management process is built on quick response and reliability, continuous service recipient updates, trained staff, specified Authority-service recipient touch points, problem identification and root cause analysis to prevent recurrence. The process includes the following steps:

1. Submission of a written complaint
2. Examination of the complaint by the HAHE
3. Response by the HAHE to complainant
4. Closure of the complaint case

It is important to point out that the Authority supports staff learning. Hence, it cares for the development and maintenance of a relevant quality culture that does not penalize failure but rewards learning and problem solving (which relate to complaints). In this way, the staff (under the guidance of senior officers) gradually becomes even more capable and confident in dealing with service problems and complaints.

Furthermore, the HAHE has developed an appeal procedure. It is the 5th phase of the Accreditation Management Process (5.1) outlined in the Authority's Quality Manual and the Accreditation Guide. According to the appeals procedure provided for, the Institution may question the formal outcomes of the IQAS/USP/FLP/NSP accreditation process, where it can demonstrate that the outcome is not based on sound evidence, that criteria have not been correctly applied or that the procedures have not been consistently implemented. The steps of this process (only for the accreditation procedure) are briefly described below:

1. The institution places a written appeal against the HAHE decision.
2. The E&A Council assigns the investigation of the appeal to the appeals' committee.
3. The Committee examines the appeal and request further evidence (if required) by the institution.
4. The Committee submits a report to the E&A Council, which is final.
5. The E&A Council accepts or rejects the appeal.
6. The HAHE sends its final decision to the institution.

If the Institution wishes to appeal the decision of the E&A Council or the judgement by the Accreditation Panel that it is not compliant with the HAHE Standards, the HAHE Appeals and Complaints Committee will hear the appeal. The Committee consists of 3 ex HAHE members (emeriti university professors).

Furthermore, the HAHE systematically welcomes feedback (positive and negative) from everyone (institutions, experts, stakeholders) involved in its quality assurance activities and uses it for learning and improving.

11. Information and opinions of stakeholders

The HAHE organized meetings with stakeholders¹⁶ representatives and discussed the results, weaknesses and recommendations drawn from the quality assurance activities, by taking into account various stakeholders interests. It set up discussion panels with¹⁷:

- Chamber members (Economic Chamber of Greece, Technical Chamber of Greece, Agronomist Chamber of Greece and representatives from professional associations of chemists, physical educators, nurses etc.)

¹⁶ Table 9 (Annex V) provides an overview of the HAHEs stakeholders.

¹⁷ Annex III provides a list of events and workshops.

[from 11/2015 to currently, there is a constant participation of a chamber member in the Authority's Council and quality assurance activities]

- Students (that have participated in internal and external quality assurance activities of institutions)
- University officials, Vice Rectors, QAU Presidents and the managing board of the Hellenic Rectors' Conference [3/2017, 10-12/2017, 5/2018]
- Experts that participated in the Authority's quality assurance activities and were willing to exchange their experiences
- Employers (e.g. Hellenic Federation of Enterprises)

During these meetings a multitude of themes were discussed with reference to the specific interests of each stakeholder group. For instance, discussions with the chamber members focused on the actual learning outcomes and professional rights of graduates and possible ways to improve their engagement in the quality assurance activities. In addition, the HAHE organized discussions with students to find out more about how they perceive the quality assurance activities and their suggestions to improve their attractiveness and participation. These communications and discussions took place during the formation of students' registry (9/2/21-23/4/21). There were 101 candidates, 48 of which have become accepted as members of the Students' registry. It should be noted that one student is elected as a member of the Evaluation and Accreditation Council of the Authority.

The Authority also aimed at further clarifying quality assurance issues and discussing them with university officials. Examples of such issues are student learning, graduates' employability, the QAU organization and operation, institutional governance and quality culture. Finally, the HAHE organized discussions with experts that took part in its quality assurance activities to gather feedback and potential areas for improvement.

Moreover, through discussions with employers the Authority focused on the needs of the labour market/organizations in terms of skills and abilities of graduates, investigation of the gap between supply and demand in graduate employment in higher education and their involvement in institutional quality assurance processes.

12. Recommendations & main findings from previous review(s) and Authority's resulting follow-up

The changes and improvements (briefly appear inside parentheses) in which the HAHE proceeded following recommendations made from its external evaluation, are divided into 9 areas of development, namely:

1. ESG 2.3 Criteria for decisions: (consistency of reporting, uniformity of applied criteria for decisions, checking of reports for errors, relevant provision for accreditation)
2. ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose: (ongoing efforts towards the amendment of legislation regarding the participation of students in review panels, development of the HAHE registry and efforts to recruit international experts beyond the Greek speaking community)
3. ESG 2.6 Follow up procedures: (adoption of follow-up procedure in the external evaluation of HEIs and in the accreditation process)
4. ESG 2.7 Periodic reviews: (careful design of the work schedule, based on previous experience)
5. ESG 2.8 System wide analysis: (drafting of the report on "National Strategy for higher education 2016-20", analysis included in the 2015 HQA Annual Report, full utilization of the MIS for higher education data analysis and production of relevant reports, recruitment of 2 new scientific staff members to support this task)
6. ESG 3.4 Resources (upgrade of software and hardware, development of the National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, recruitment of new staff members - now count to 20 (16 previously))

7. ESG 3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies: (a follow up procedure has been adopted in the external evaluation and accreditation process, an appeal procedure is now provided for, the HAHE makes ongoing efforts towards the amendment of legislation to address the issue of student participation in review panels)
8. ESG 3.8 Accountability procedures: (formalization of internal quality assurance system in line with ISO 9001: 2015)
9. ENQA Criterion 8ii-Miscellaneous : (an appeal procedure is provided and described in the HAHE Accreditation Guide)

For a more detailed presentation, please see Annex IV.

13. SWOT analysis

The following SWOT Analysis refers to 2019 and previous years. A new edition is under preparation by the HAHE following the changes in its legal framework and strategic enablers.

Strengths

1. Clear institutional identity in line with the basic guidelines of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Member of ENQA.
2. Experience of over 10 years (portraying significant results) in improving the quality of the Greek higher education institutions, in addition to experience with reference to the national strategy for higher education.
3. Analytical and in-depth expertise of the national and international context of higher education (annual reports, national strategy, etc.).
4. Developed instruments for the implementation of external quality assurance of HEIs: Standards, guides, forms, Registry of Experts, National Information System for Quality Assurance, quality indicators, process monitoring, feedback mechanisms. Full implementation of the quality cycle.
5. Developed internal quality assurance tools. Implementation of documented standard operating procedures based on the Quality Manual and the ESG 2015.
6. Organization based on quality management principles (implementation of ISO 9001: 2018, internal structure, job descriptions, written procedures and instructions, flowcharts, training, and staff evaluation).
7. Established cooperation with expert partners. Significant number of trained experts.
8. Established cooperation and interaction with HEIs.
9. Upgraded public image (Institutions, the press, etc.)

Weaknesses

1. Serious deficiencies in staffing and funding due to governmental reliance.
2. Delayed launching of the accreditation process due to a two-year delay in funding from the NSRF.
3. Significant potential for enriching the registry of experts and engaging them in a variety of quality assurance activities.
4. Significant room for improvement of the Agency's institutional and quality culture (internal code of operation of the Council/code of conduct, organization, critical knowledge and skills of the staff).
5. Significant gap in the implementation of the HAHE national strategy actions due to the relative inactivity

of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (excellence, programmatic agreements, etc.).

6. Legal barriers regarding students' participation and the implementation of quality assurance results by the HAHE (the former legal framework that

regulated the operation of the Authority did not allow for student representation in its Governance or participation in external QA activities).

7. Limitations in covering the costs of accreditation committees and external experts' participation.

Opportunities

1. Central role of Quality Assurance in the European Agenda for higher education.

2. Strengthened independence profile of Quality Assurance Bodies (ESG 2015).

3. Declared governmental interest in upgrading the role of the HAHE.

4. Wide acceptance HAHE'S role by the HEIs.

5. Significant funding available from the NSRF.

6. Significant opportunities for the HAHE to participate in European projects and international networks.

7. Significant opportunities for developing quality assurance activities suitable for joint study programmes, especially within the context of the establishment of European Universities.

Threats

1. Legal and financial barriers in the HAHE's responsibilities and role

1.1 Shrinking responsibilities in the recent legal framework for higher education that affect quality assurance (accredited study programs without accreditation, abolition of advisory function for study programmes specializations, lateral and conflicting authorities in the National Council for Education, lateral and conflicting authorities in the National Council for Education and Human Resource Development, etc.).

1.2 Legal issues and/or gaps that constitute obstacles as to the compliance of the HAHE with the ESG2015 in terms of student participation in the Council of the Agency and the Accreditation Panels, as well as the exclusive authority in enforcing the consequences of non-accreditation.

1.3 Risk of slowing down accreditations, due to the direct dependency of accreditation funding on the NSRF.

1.4 Absence of legal provision for the expression of the Agency's opinion in Higher Education regulations (new Institutions, Departments, and Study Programmes).

2. Significant obstacles in the legal framework of HEIs that adversely affect quality

2.1 Ten-year instability in the legal Framework of Higher Education.

2.2 Over-regulation, limitation of autonomy and increased bureaucracy of HEIs. Restrictive arrangements for duration of studies, admissions, selection and evaluation of staff, financial management framework, internal administrative and academic organization, governance, etc.

2.3 Restructuring of the Charter of Higher Education with divergence from the principles and conclusions of quality assurance and strategic planning, and without studying the potential outcomes.

3. Deterrents for the effectiveness of quality assurance in HEIs

3.1 Continuous disinvestment of human and material resources in HEIs over the last decade, thereby limiting their ability to meet quality requirements.

3.2 Significant deficit in the quality culture and strategic management of the Institutions and weak role of Quality Assurance Units within the Institutional framework.

3.3 Significant coordination issues at a national level for the collection and processing of higher education data.

3.4 Absence of incentives for the further development of internal quality assurance of HEIs

14. Current challenges and areas for future development

The HAHE planning for future development is based on the formulation of strategy which followed the review of its internal quality assurance system and strategy. Bearing in mind the strategic analysis that is presented in the previous chapter, the following strategies were articulated:

S-O / Particularly High Prospects

The HAHE can capitalize on the existing legal framework, combining the expertise and experience gained to date, the widespread acceptance of its role by HEIs, and the funding available from the NSRF. In particular, the HAHE can imminently initiate:

1. The promotion of high quality in Higher Education

The HAHE should complete the development of specific quality standards for all types of accreditations (in accordance with its responsibilities) and take the initiative of fully and immediately activating its authority related to promoting excellence and linking quality assurance to the funding of HEIs.

a) Development of accreditation criteria for second and third cycle degree programmes and establishment of the relevant standard.

b) Development of accreditation criteria for lifelong learning systems and programs provided by HEIs, along with the establishment of a standard.

c) Establishment of a specific standard for joint study programs specifically within the framework of European Universities.

d) Utilization of the availability and know-how of its experts in developing a state-of-the-art quality guide for higher education.

e) Elaboration of criteria and announcement of pilot actions of excellence in HEIs (pending approval by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs).

f) Establishment of criteria for programmatic agreements with the HEIs, pilot run implementation of HEIs' funding based on exceptional performance (pending approval by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs). The results of the accreditation of both Internal Quality Systems and Undergraduate Programs should be utilized.

g) Need for HAHE to assume a leading role in the management of national higher education data in cooperation with the Hellenic Statistical Authority and the National Documentation Centre.

2. The organization and enhancement of the Authority's advisory function at the level of a National Strategy for Higher Education and of the individual issues of quality of studies, research, and the administrative work of HEIs.

a) The HAHE can draw up recommendations / positions with reference to the national strategy (regardless of whether the Authority is solicited to do so), considering the existing institutional framework, and its in-depth expertise of the country's HEIs, as well as international developments in higher education. The Authority should also be able to offer its expertise upon the restructuring of the academic charter, the short-term level 5 programs provided by

HEIs in line with the recently established legislation, as well as the rationalization of the Integrated Masters' institution.

b) The HAHE should develop a specific guide of criteria for all categories and cases included in its field of operations (new departments, introductory scientific directions, study programmes, similar departments, relevance etc.)

3. The provision of continuous support, guidance and direction to HEIs, the sharing of expertise and recommendations for improvement with reference to quality.

a) The HAHE should continue to support the Institutions by providing guidance and recommendations as well as organized lectures to the academic community on generic and specialized quality issues. The way in which its public presence is organized should be included in a distinct internal manual of the HAHE.

b) The training needs of the members and staff of the Institutional Quality Assurance Units should be identified and addressed within a specific training program. Support for Institutional Quality Assurance Units through the NSRF promoted by the HAHE should be increased in budget and duration and should be accompanied by measures implementing the Institutional Quality Assurance Units' role.

c) The HAHE should set criteria and conditions for the maintenance of the Internal Quality Systems accreditations in the context of monitoring the implementation of accreditation recommendations, with the objective of consolidating the institutional role of Institutional Quality Assurance Units, implementing effective strategic management and the quality policy for the Institutions.

d) The HAHE should issue a specific guide with recommendations for improving the internal quality assurance of the Institutions, which will seek to remove the weaknesses identified during the accreditation process. These recommendations will be used to revise the standard when re-accrediting the Internal Quality Assurance Units and the Undergraduate Programmes.

4. The provision of the necessary resources to carry out its mission and strategy. The HAHE should have adequate funding and human resources.

a) The establishment of a standard and timely procedure by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, exploring the possibility of instituting special staffing procedures by way of exception.

b) The submission of a request to the competent bodies (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, etc.) for the approval of appropriations to fill new scientific staff positions through the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP).

c) The supplementation of funding of the NSRF Act under implementation, to the extent of its original budget for the employment of additional external partners.

d) The granting of equivalent additional funding from the NSRF, for the accreditation of Master's, Doctorate Programmes and Centres of Lifelong Learning.

e) The granting of new funding for expanding capabilities and upgrading of the National Information System for Quality Assurance.

f) The funding of actions of excellence for HEIs and additional funding of those that have achieved high quality performance based on programmatic agreements.

O-W / Manageable Weaknesses

The HAHE is currently able to address most of its weaknesses in combination with the stated governmental interest in upgrading its role and its widespread acceptance by the HEIs.

1. The HAHE should seek legislative governmental intervention to enhance its independence at the organizational, operational, and financial level by:

a) The elimination of legal obstacles and the restoration of its exclusive scope of authority (amendment of Law 4485 / 17).

b) The establishment of the possibility of electing student representatives following a call for interest in participating in the Council and the Registry (amendment of Law 4009/11).

c) The establishment of the Authority's sole authority to enforce the decision of the accreditation process (amendment of Law 4009/11).

d) The possibility of staffing the HAHE through the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP)

and simplifying derogation procedures by exception (amendment of Law 4009/11).

e) The possibility of obtaining and managing own revenues from the provision of Quality Assurance services abroad and the possibility of employing external partners (amendment of Law 4009/11).

2. The HAHE should intensify its efforts to improve internal quality assurance, develop institutional and quality culture by internalizing operational rules that promote its vision, mission, and values of quality. The Authority should promote transparency, meritocracy, accountability, and professional excellence in its operations.

In particular, the HAHE should develop additional rules and procedures for internal quality assurance on:

a) The development and implementation of the HAHE's communication strategy.

b) The establishment of operational rules for the Council (explicit roles, rights, and obligations of the members).

c) The development and implementation of an internal staff training program on quality management.

S - T / Manageable Threats

The HAHE should develop and make public a framework of principles for the necessary changes in the national context of higher education.

1. The HAHE shall be governed by an adapted institutional framework in its profile as an independent administrative authority with full harmonization of its responsibilities with the requirements of quality assurance authorities in the European Higher Education Area. Important elements in this context are the strengthening of operational and administrative independence without the mediation of any other entity and the flexibility necessary to carry out its mission. The HAHE must be able to express its opinion on its own institutional framework.

2. HEIs urgently need an institutional framework for removing the obstacles toward the effective implementation of quality assurance. These obstacles have been highlighted and presented in the results of evaluations and accreditations and have also resulted from the restructuring of the Higher Education Charter. The HAHE should draw up its own opinion on all quality issues affecting HEIs in the context of a national strategy for higher education.

3. HEIs urgently need to develop and implement a plan to replenish their financial and human resources and to strengthen their management and governance systems so that they can more fully and effectively meet quality requirements. The HAHE should specifically refer to the adequacy and management of Higher Education resources, based on experience with Quality Assurance actions, in the context of the National Higher Education Strategy.

Glossary of Terms

AAQ Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance

ACPUA Agencia de Calidad y Prospectiva Universitaria de Aragon

ASAE Academic Councils of Higher Education and Research

ASPETE School of Pedagogical and Technological Education

CYQAA Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation

E&A Council Evaluation and Accreditation Council

EACEA Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency

ECTS European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

EEC External Evaluation Committee

EER External Evaluation Report

EHEA European Higher Education Area

ELSTAT Hellenic Statistical Authority

ENQA European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

EOPPEP National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance

EPAL Vocational Upper Secondary School

EQAR European Quality Assurance Register

EQF European Qualifications Framework

ESG Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

EUA European University Association

FLSP Foreign Language Study Programme

HAHE Hellenic Authority for Higher Education

HEI Higher Education Institution

HOU Hellenic Open University

HQA Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency

HQF Hellenic Qualification Framework

INQAAHE International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

IQAS Internal Quality Assurance Unit

ISO International Organization for Standardization

KPI Key Performance Indicators

NISQA National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

NSP New Study Programme

NSRF National Strategic Reference Framework

OECD Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

POSDEP Hellenic Federation of University Teachers' Association

QA Quality Assurance

QAU (MODIP) Quality Assurance Unit

SC Supreme Council

SP Study Programme

SAR Self-Assessment Report

SWOT Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

TEI Technological Educational Institution

TSMEDF Engineers and Public Contractors Pension Fund

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

USP Undergraduate Study Programme

Annex I: Timeline of the SAR Preparation

PHASES	Activities	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
Phase 1: Preparation	Formation of Project Team								
	Kick off meeting								
	Development of Project Schedule								
Phase 2: Collection of data and documents	Identification of sources for evidence								
	Review of Previous SER & Follow Up Report								
	Collection of documents								
	Translations and Notes								
Phase 3: Drafting	Preparation of a SAR draft								
	SAR Finalization								
Phase 4: Assessment and Council Approval	Critical assessment of the SAR								
	Identification of improvements/suggestions								
	Council Approval								
Phase 5: Submission	Submission of SAR to ENQA								

Table 7: Timeline of the SAR Preparation (June: Week 1-4, July: Week 5-7, September: Week 8)

Annex II: Summary of results

Accreditation

As mentioned in chapter 5 of the SAR, from 2018 until 2020, the HAHE, following public calls for proposals for accreditation to the Institutions, completed twenty two (22) Accreditations of Internal Quality Assurance Systems (IQAS) and (143) Accreditations of Undergraduate Programs (SP) of HEIs.

The following tables provide a brief presentation of results by accreditation type (IQAS, Undergraduate Study Programme) and year. The degree of (overall and by principle) compliance is also being displayed.

Table 8: IQAS compliance by principle

IQAS	P1. Institution Policy for Quality Assurance			P2. Provision and Management of the Necessary Resources			P3. Establishing Goals for Quality Assurance			P4. Structure, Organization and Operation of the IQAS					
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
Fully compliant	50,00%	75,00%	85,71%	50,00%	50,00%	14,29%	50,00%	75,00%	42,86%	50,00%	75,00%	57,14%			
Substantially compliant	41,67%	25,00%	14,29%	50,00%	50,00%	85,71%	41,67%	25,00%	57,14%	33,33%	25,00%	42,86%			
Partially compliant	8,33%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	8,33%	0,00%	0,00%	16,67%	0,00%	0,00%			

IQAS	P5. Self-Assessment			P6. Collection of Quality Data: Measuring, Analysis and Improvement			P7. Public Information			P8. External Evaluation and Accreditation of IQAS			Overall		
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
Fully compliant	41,67%	37,50%	57,14%	33,33%	25,00%	28,57%	41,67%	37,50%	42,86%	58,33%	87,50%	57,14%	41,67%	87,50%	71,43%
Substantially compliant	58,33%	62,50%	42,86%	41,67%	75,00%	71,43%	41,67%	62,50%	57,14%	25,00%	12,50%	42,86%	58,33%	12,50%	28,57%
Partially compliant	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	16,67%	0,00%	0,00%	16,67%	0,00%	0,00%	16,67%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%

Table 9: Study programme compliance by principle

USP	P1. Quality Assurance Policy			P2. Design and Approval of Programmes			P3. Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment			P4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification			P5. Teaching Staff					
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
Fully compliant	44,44%	75,32%	73,21%	33,33%	58,44%	58,93%	44,44%	54,55%	53,57%	33,33%	77,92%	69,64%	55,56%	66,23%	62,50%			
Substantially compliant	55,56%	22,08%	23,21%	55,56%	33,77%	37,50%	33,33%	44,16%	44,64%	55,56%	22,08%	26,79%	44,44%	33,77%	35,71%			
Partially compliant	0,00%	2,60%	3,57%	11,11%	7,79%	3,57%	22,22%	1,30%	1,79%	11,11%	0	3,57%	0,00%	0,00%	1,79%			

USP	P6. Learning Resources and Student Support			P7. Information Management			P8. Public Information			P9. On-Going Monitoring and Periodic Internal Review of Programmes			P10. Regular External Evaluation of Undergraduate Programmes			Overall		
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
Fully compliant	44,44%	59,74%	64,29%	44,44%	74,03%	69,64%	66,67%	76,62%	73,21%	44,44%	61,04%	75%	66,67%	70,13%	78,57%	44,40%	81,82%	75%
Substantially compliant	33,33%	37,66%	35,71%	33,33%	23,38%	28,57%	33,33%	19,48%	19,64%	44,44%	37,66%	23,21%	33,33%	27,27%	16,07%	55,55%	18,18%	23,21%
Partially compliant	22,22%	2,60%	0%	22,22%	2,60%	1,79%	0,00%	3,90%	7,14%	11,11%	1,30%	1,79%	0,00%	2,60%	5,36%	0,00%	0,00%	1,79%

Accreditation Results (2018)

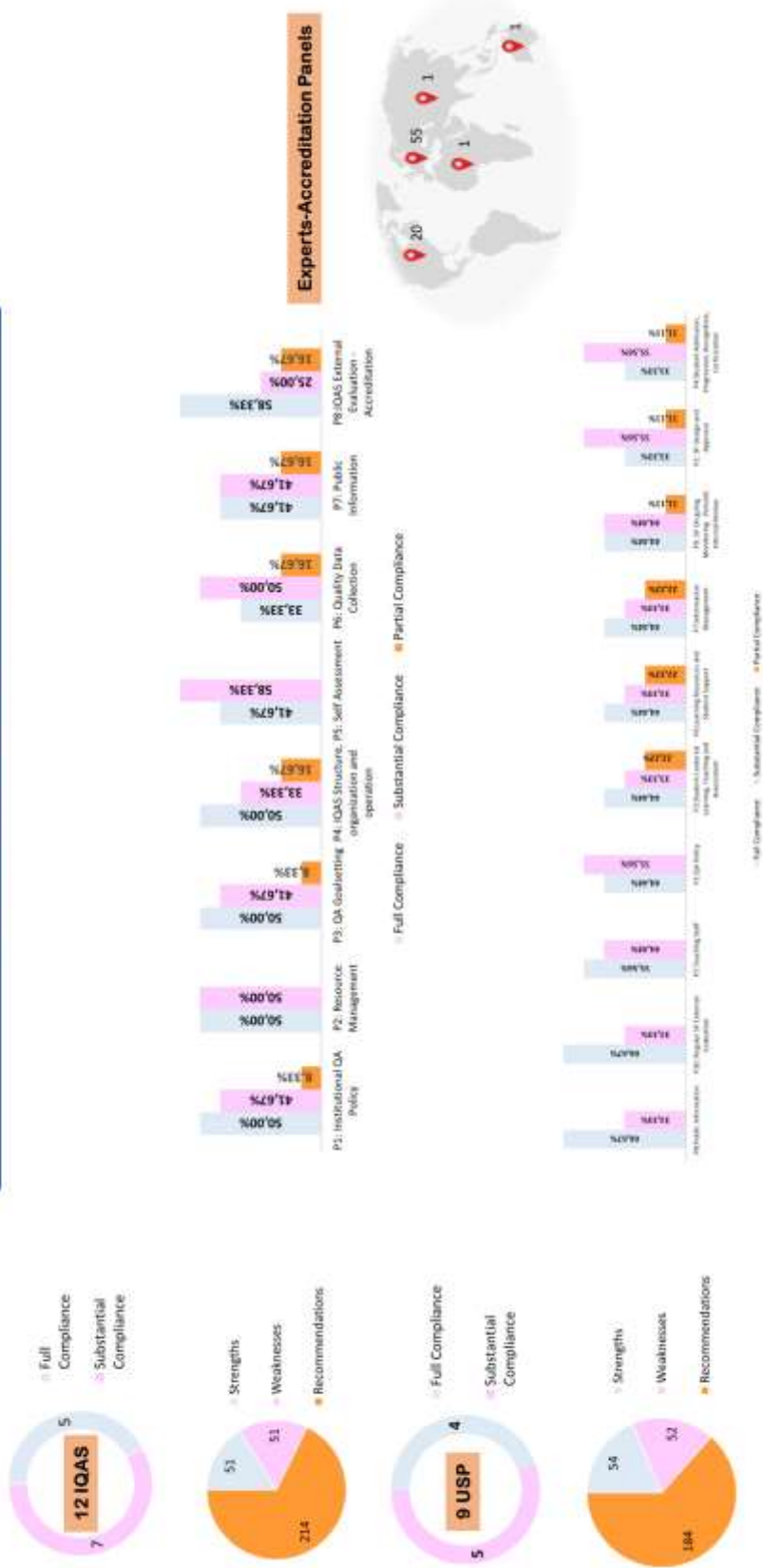


Figure 5 : Accreditation Results 2018

Accreditation Results (2019)

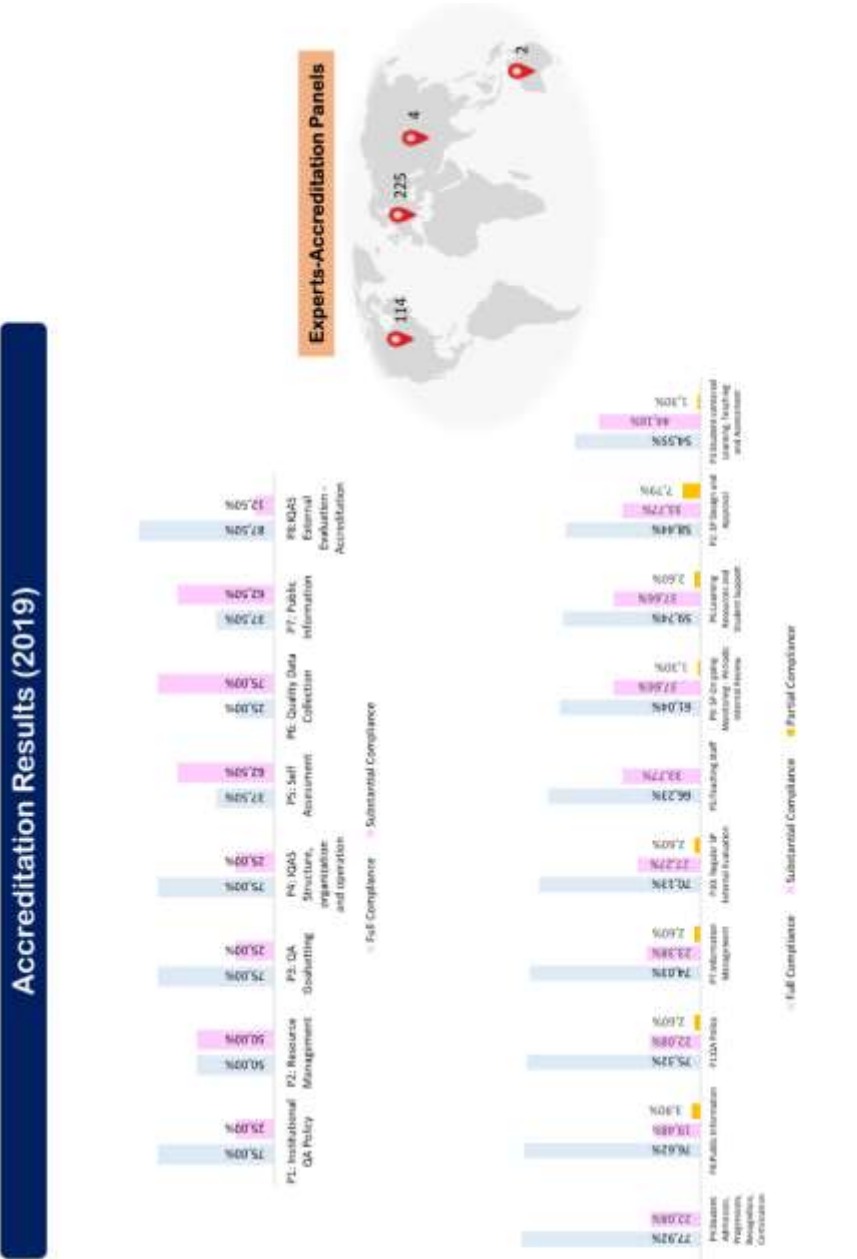


Figure 6 : Accreditation Results 2019

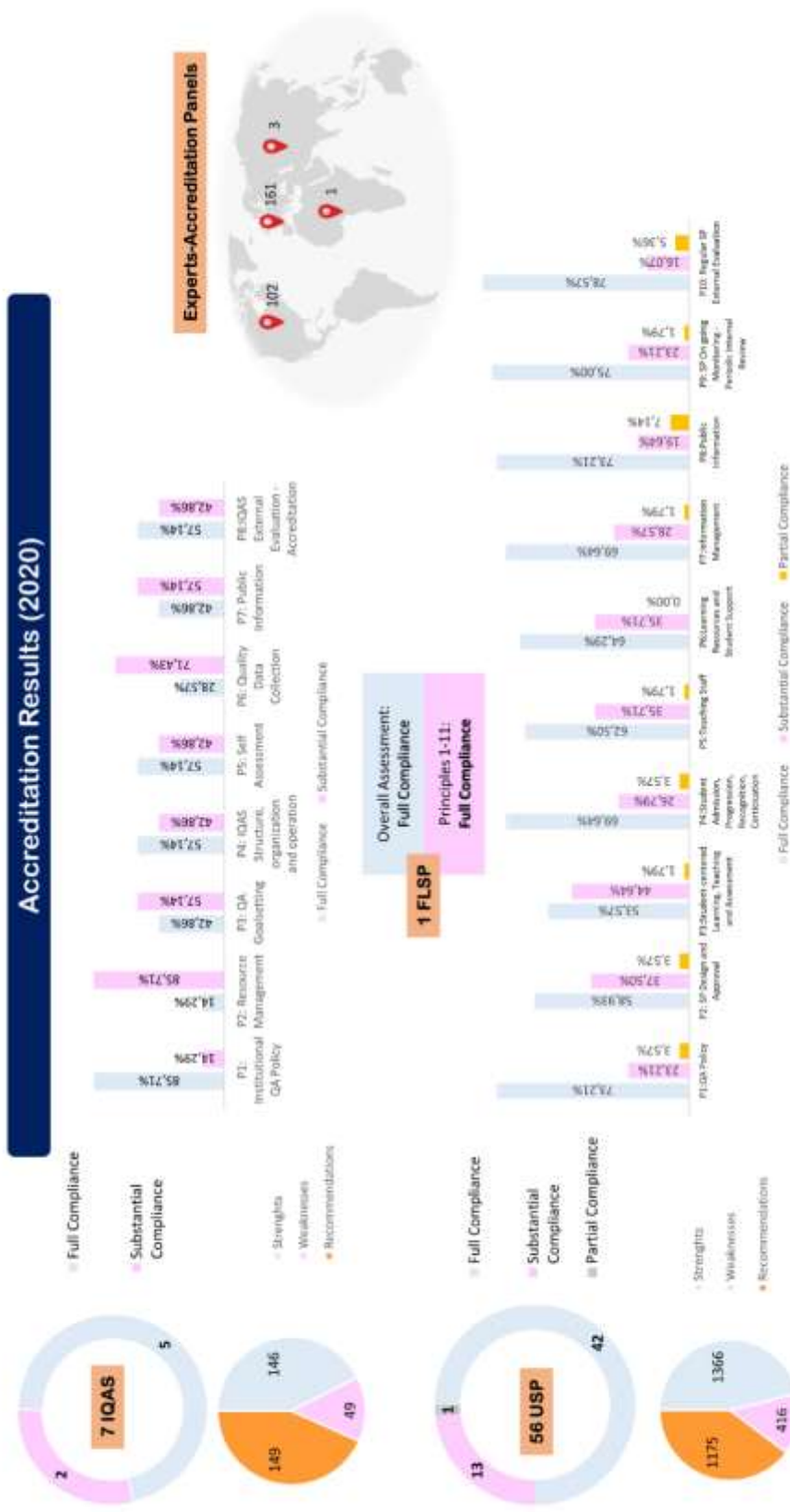


Figure 7 : Accreditation Results 2020

Annex III: Briefings and workshops

To facilitate quality assurance activities and communicate its work, the Authority organized/participated in the following briefings/workshops:

2015-2017

- 05-06/2015: Workshops with the QAU Presidents, University & TEIs officials.
- 20-21/03/2017: The HQA organized a two day workshop with the QAU Presidents, University & TEIs officials. During the workshop, an overall assessment of the Institutional Evaluation was made. In addition, the usefulness of the findings and the recommendations recorded through the external evaluation were presented and discussed as well as the next steps and objectives. Moreover, the concept of accreditation was introduced, described and analyzed along with the IQAS & SP standards followed by an investigation of the way these QA activities will be implemented through the NSRF.
- 11-12/2017: Multiple briefings in the HQA premises with the QAU President and staff by institution. The aim has been the presentation of quality standards and their requirements, the roadmap for accreditation and the technical prerequisites for data input in the NISQA platform.
- 5-11/2017: The HQA organized multiple presentations to institutions. The presentations aimed to inform university officials and department presidents about the process and accreditation schedule, the relevant documentation material and the technical specifications of NISQA
- The HQA organized meetings in its headquarters to support and guide institutions in the process of developing their IQAS manual.
- The HQA participated in the University Rectors` and TEI Presidents` Conference and presented a series of issues related to the preparation of institutions for the IQAS and SP accreditations.
- 25-07-2017: The President of HQA was invited to the Hellenic Parliament to present the Authority`s views on an article of a draft law which referred to the HQA. The Council made some remarks regarding the content of the draft law that were submitted to the President of the Hellenic Parliament and the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs.
- 19-10-2017: The HQA President and Director General presented the Annual Report 2016 to the Standing Committee on Educational Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament and other invited actors.

2018

- 25-05-2018: The HQA organized a seminar in "Implementation of the IQAS - Quality Manual", which was addressed to the Presidents and QAU staff of universities. During this seminar all stages of the process were presented and analyzed from launching the IQAS, the presentation of the quality manual, the procedures, structure, processes, the way of their implementation, and interaction, the continuation of the quality cycle and the follow up report.
- 01-01-2018/22-12/2018: The HQA organized technical briefings in its headquarters with the Presidents and QAU staff regarding quality standards, requirements and technical support for the process of accreditation.
- 16-02-2018: During the consultation phase of the draft law regarding the establishment of West Attica, the President of the HQA was invited to Parliament and expressed the views of the Council respectively.
- 23-04-2018: The HQA participated in the Rectors and Vice Rectors Synod Conference. The President and the Director General of HQA discussed about the IQAS and study program accreditations
- 21-09-2018: The HQA President handed the Annual Report 2017 to the President of the Hellenic Parliament.
- 13/15-12/2018: The HQA took part in the 20th Synod of Vice- Rectors of Academic Affairs and Staff. The President and the Director General of the HQA discussed about the progress in the process of accreditation.
-

2019

- 15&16/3/2019: The HQA President and the General Director participated in the 90th Rectors` Synod.
- 8/4/2019: The HQA President and the Council met with the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, Mr. C. Gavroglou and the General Secretary of the Ministry
- 11/4/2019: Meeting with the President of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation, Prof. M. Koutselini.
- April - June 2019: The HQA organized meetings and discussions with officials at the University of Macedonia, the University of West Attica, the University of Western Macedonia and Panteion University. The theme of these meetings has been quality assurance and accreditation.
- 13/05/2019: Visit by Mrs N. Kerameos, Member of Parliament and Responsible for Education, Research and Religious Affairs in New Democracy party and discussions with the Council`s members about issues of the Authority and Higher Education
- 13-15/06/2019: The HQA President and the General Director participated in the 91st Rectors` Synod
- 1/10/2019: Honorary event for the contribution of the Former President of Authority, Prof. N. Paisidou and the Former Vice President, Prof. I. Gerothanasis
- 3/10/2019: The HQA President handed the Annual Report 2018 to the President of the Hellenic Parliament and the President of the Standing Committee on Cultural and Educational Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament
- 30/10/2019: Briefing of the Rectors` Synod Bureau by HQA officials about quality assurance issues
- 12/11/2019: The HQA President and the General Director presented the Annual Report 2018 to the President of the Hellenic Parliament and the President of the Standing Committee on Cultural and Educational Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament
- 12-13/11/2019: Meetings with representatives from Professional Associations (Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, Panhellenic Medicine Association) and discussions about professional rights of graduates and participation in quality assurance activities
- 28-30/11/2019: The HQA President and the General Director participated in the 92nd Rectors` Synod.

2020

- 13/05/2020: Meeting of the President and General Director of HAHE with the General Secretary of Higher Education and discussions about accreditation, funding and quality data in higher education.
- 22/04/2020: 1st Supreme Council meeting (discussion about HAHE, goals and plans for higher education, election of Vice President, members` service, election of student)
- 15/05/2020: 1st Evaluation and Accreditation Council meeting (discussion about quality assurance, evidence and goals)
- 27/04/2020: E Forum for best practices and suggestion on alternative ways of students` assessments and examinations due to COVID19
- 30-31/5/2020: Participation in a 2 day seminar on distance education and the challenge of open education organized by the Open Technologies Alliance (GFOSS) in collaboration with HAHE, the Institute of Educational Policy, Universities and Research Centers
- June 2020: Teleconferences and meetings of the President and Rectors (University of West Attica, Hellenic Mediterranean University, University of Peloponnese, Democritus University of Thrace, University of Western Macedonia). Discussions were held regarding accreditation, national planning for higher education, performance based funding, quality criteria and other relevant issues.
- 15/7/2020: Communications with HEIS and information regarding Students` Register and students` participation in the External Evaluation and Accreditation Committees.
- 27-31/7/2020: Participation in the 94th Rectors` Synod held online. Presentation of the criteria for the annual funding of HEIs.
- 9/9/2020: Communications with HEIS regarding the criteria identified by the Authority`s Supreme Council as per the establishment, renaming, location transfer of academic units and recognition of 5year study programmes as Integrated Master Programmes.

- 3/11/2020: Commencement of the HAHE –ELSTAT collaboration aiming to improve the quality of national data in higher education
- 11/12/2020: On-line meeting of the President and General Director of HAHE with officials in Panteion University.
- 16-18/12/2020: Participation in the 94th Rectors` Synod held online. Presentation of HAHE`s suggestion as per the criteria and indicators used to assess quality in HEIs that will be included in institutional planning agreements with the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

Annex IV: Recommendations, Changes and Improvements

Table 10: Recommendations, changes and improvements

Guidelines Vol.24 (ESG 2015)	Guidelines Vol. 19/2009 (ESG 2005)	SAR 2014	Panel Report (v.8 FIN_7 March 2015)		ENQA Board Decision	HQA Follow- up Report 2017	Actions taken
			Findings	Recommendations			
2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance. External QA should <u>address</u> the effectiveness of the internal QA described in part 1 of the ESG	2.1 Use of internal QA procedures. External QA procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal QA processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.	p. 37-40	fully compliant	none	—	—	All processes concerning internal and external quality assurance of HEIs have been designed in detail, illustrated and published in 7 documents
2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose. External QA should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, <u>while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders</u> should be involved <u>in its design and continuous improvement.</u>	2.2 Development of external QA processes. The aims and objectives of QA processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including HE institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.	p. 40-41	fully compliant	none	—	—	The HAHE has set internal procedures (within its Quality Manual) for the design and implementation of methodologies (based on ESG2015) to ensure fitness for purpose of its quality assurance activities. During the design of methodologies, stakeholders are consulted.
	2.4 Processes fit for purpose. All external QA processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.	p. 44-47	substantially compliant	- stronger student voice - inclusion of experts from outside the greek-speaking communities	—	_working towards amendment of legislation_ open access to the register of experts_ publication of call through other QA Agencies	
2.3 Implementing processes. External QA processes should be <u>reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently</u> and published. They include - a self-assessment or equivalent; - an external assessment <u>normally</u> including a site visit; - a report resulting from the external assessment; - a consistent follow-up.	3.7 External QA criteria and processes used by the agencies. The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include: - a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the QA process; - an external assessment by a group of experts, including, <u>as appropriate</u> , (a) student member(s), and site visits <u>as decided by the agency</u> ; - publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes; - a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the QA process <u>in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.</u>	p. 64	substantially compliant	pursue student representation on HQA review panels facilitate a review mechanism for panel decisions	partially compliant	appeal procedure is now provided for_ ongoing efforts towards the amendment of legislation	The HQA has established an Appeals' Committee which operates based on rules included in the accreditation guide. Regarding students representation, the HQA has created a specific section in its registry, has announced a public call for students' registration (in progress) and has requested a legal intervention for the necessary adjustment of its legal framework.
	2.6 Follow-up procedures. QA processes <u>which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan</u> , should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.	p. 49	substantially compliant	full responsibility for consideration of follow-up reports should rest with HQA	partially compliant	adoption of follow-up procedure in the external evaluation of HEIs and in the accreditation process	

2.4 Peer-review experts. External QA should be carried out by groups of experts that include (a) student member(s).	3.7 External QA criteria and processes used by the agencies. [...] an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), [...]	p. 64	substantially compliant	pursue student representation on HQA review panels	partially compliant	ongoing efforts towards the amendment of legislation	As above
2.5 Criteria for outcomes. Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external QA should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.	2.3 Criteria for decisions. Any formal decisions made as a result of an external QA activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.	p. 42-43	substantially compliant	ensure consistency on reporting	fully compliant	_new template_ check of the draft reports_ relevant provision for the accreditation process	The HAHE has identified specific criteria and templates for ensuring consistency in the reporting of final judgements. These criteria and templates are published and communicated to all institutions and experts of the accreditation panels.
	3.7 External QA criteria and processes used by the agencies. The [...] criteria [...] should be pre-defined and publicly available.	p. 64	substantially compliant	—	—	—	
2.6 Reporting. 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.	2.5 Reporting. Reports should be published and should be written in a style, which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.	p. 48	fully compliant	none	—	—	All accreditation reports, decisions and annual HAHE reports are published in the Authority's website.
2.7 Complaints and Appeals. Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external QA processes and communicated to the institutions.	3.7 External QA criteria and processes used by the agencies. Guideline: Agencies that make formal QA decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.	p. 64	substantially compliant	facilitate a review mechanism for panel decisions	partially compliant	appeal procedure is now provided for	The HAHE has established an Appeals' Committee which operates based on rules included in the accreditation guide. Regarding students' representation, the HAHE has designed a specific section in its registry, has announced a public call for students (in progress) and has requested a legal intervention for the necessary adjustment of its legal framework.
	2.7 Periodic reviews. External QA of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.	p. 49-50	substantially compliant	timely delivery of the programme of work	partially compliant	careful design of the work schedule, based on previous experience	
3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance. Agencies should undertake external QA 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.	3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for HE. The external QA of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external QA processes described in Part 2 of the ESG.	p. 52	substantially compliant	see recommendations as listed in Part 2 of the ESG	—	—	All quality assurance activities, goals and objectives are included in the HAHE annual reports. Nearly all functions of the Agency involve stakeholder involvement. Stakeholders participate in the Agency's governance and activities.
	3.3 Activities. Agencies should undertake external QA activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.	p. 53-57	fully compliant	none	—	—	
	3.5 Mission statement. Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.	p. 61-62	fully compliant	none	—	—	
3.2 Official status. Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as QA agencies by competent public authorities.	3.2 Official status. Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external QA and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.	p. 52-53	fully compliant	none	—	—	
3.3 Independence. 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.	3.6 Independence. Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as HE institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.	p. 62-63	fully compliant	none	—	—	

<p>3.4 Thematic Analysis. Agencies should <u>regularly</u> publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external QA activities.</p>	<p>2.8 System-wide analyses. QA agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.</p>	<p>p. 50-51</p>	<p>substantially compliant</p>	<p>support system-wide analysis and quality encacement activity- increase its resources for the above</p>	<p>fully compliant</p>	<p>drafting of the report on "National Strategy for HE 2016-20" _ analysis included in the 2015 HQA Annual Report_ recruitment of 2 new scientific staff members</p>	<p>The thematic analysis of the quality assurance activities is performed on an annual basis and its results are published in the Agency's annual reports (2015, 2016, 2017,2018).The number of scientific staff member has increased.</p>
<p>3.5 Resources. Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.</p>	<p>3.4 Resources. Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external QA process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.</p>	<p>p. 57-60</p>	<p>substantially compliant</p>	<p>maintain and increase its resources</p>	<p>fully compliant</p>	<p>upgrade of S/W & H/W_ NISQA _ staff members now count 20 (16 previously)</p>	<p>The upgrading of the Authority's technological infrastructure is constant and the National Information System for Quality Assurance offers the possibility for generating KPIs.</p>
<p>3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct. Agencies should have in place processes <u>for internal QA related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.</u></p>	<p>3.8 Accountability procedures. Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.</p>	<p>p. 65-67</p>	<p>partially compliant</p>	<p>formalise HQA's internal feedback arrangements</p>	<p>substantially compliant</p>	<p>formalization of internal QA in line with ISO 9001:2015</p>	<p>Internal QA is in line with ISO9001:2015 and its internal quality manual</p>
<p>3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies. <u>Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.</u></p>	<p>3.8 Accountability procedures. Guideline: [...] A mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years. [...]</p>	<p>p. 65-67</p>	<p>partially compliant</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>—</p>	<p>The HAHE has fully implemented the cycle of quality in its internal QA annually and is undergoing an external evaluation (within 5 years from the previous evaluation).</p>

Annex V: The HAHE Stakeholders

Table 11: Indicative list of HAHE Stakeholders

Professional Associations	Ministries	Other actors	Institutions
<p>Hellenic Federation of Enterprises</p> <p>Hellenic Bank Association</p> <p>Union of Greek Ship-owners</p> <p>Greek Tourism Confederation</p> <p>Athens Medical Association</p> <p>Association of Greek Chemists</p> <p>Association of Greek Physicists</p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs</p>	<p>Hellenic Statistical Authority</p> <p>National Documentation Centre</p> <p>Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection</p> <p>National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance</p>	<p>Higher Education Institutions</p> <p>Hellenic Federation of University Teachers' Association (POSDEP)</p>
Students	QA Agencies (in HE) and Networks	Research Centres	Chambers
<p>Undergraduates</p> <p>Graduates</p> <p>Doctoral</p>	<p>Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA)</p> <p>European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)</p> <p>International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)</p>	<p>National Hellenic Research Foundation</p> <p>National Observatory of Athens</p> <p>Foundation for Research and Technology</p>	<p>Technical Chamber of Greece</p> <p>Economic Chamber of Greece</p> <p>Athens Chamber Of Small & Medium Industries</p> <p>Hotel Chamber of Greece</p> <p>Agronomist Chamber of Greece</p>

Annex VI: Feedback from experts

In 2021, the HAHE designed and conducted a survey to gather feedback from the external experts that participated in its quality accreditation activities. The questionnaire and a cover letter explaining the purpose and significance of the survey were emailed to 187 external experts. Overall, 102 questionnaires were received, thus attaining a response rate of 54.5%. The findings appear below:

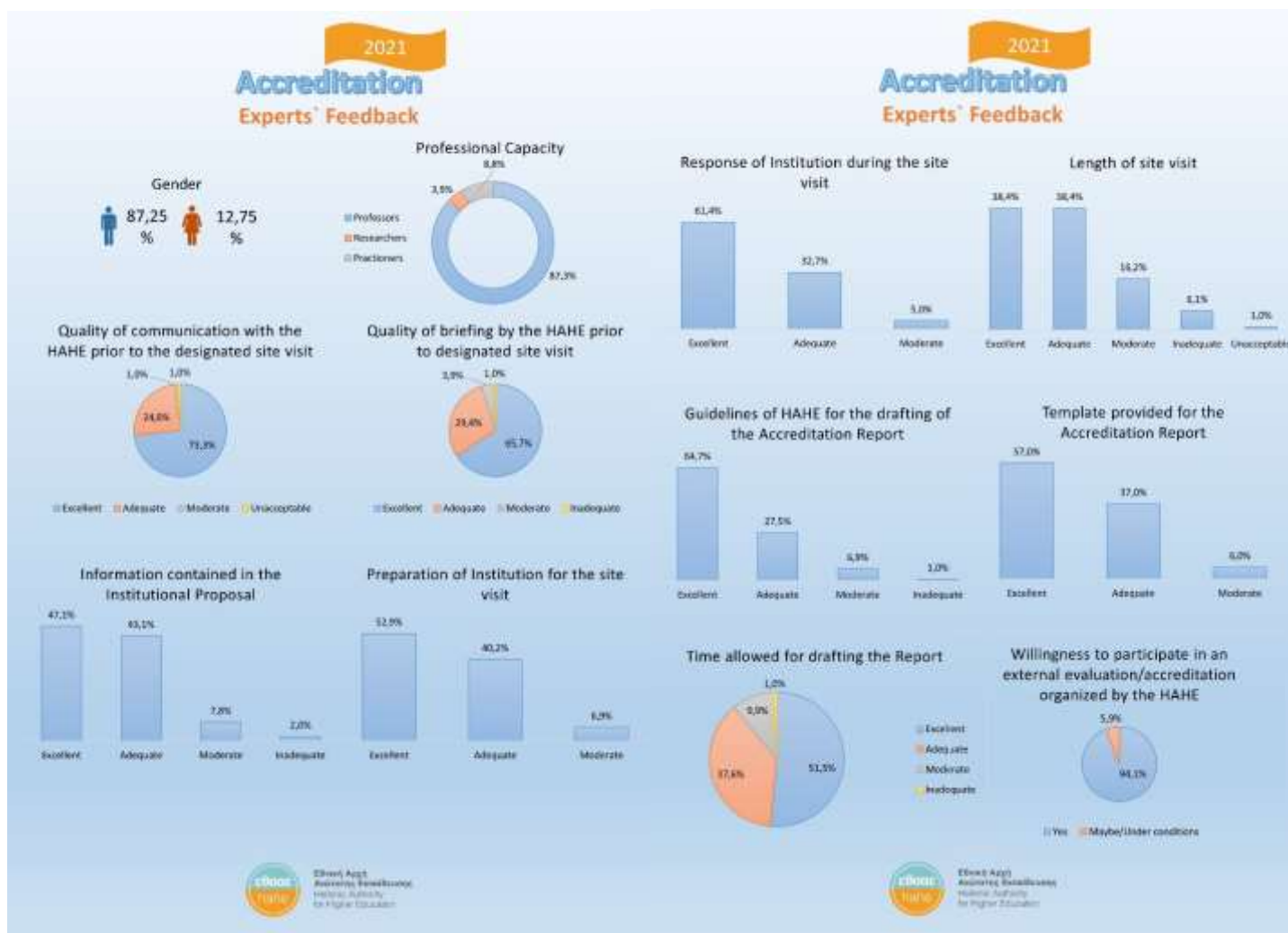


Figure 8: Accreditation: Experts' Feedback

Annex VII: ESG-HAHE Standards alignment

Table 12: ESG-HAHE Standards alignment

ESG 2015	HAHE STANDARD FOR IQAS	HAHE STANDARD FOR STUDY PROGRAMMES	HAHE STANDARD FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY PROGRAMMES	HAHE STANDARD FOR NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES
1.1 Policy for quality assurance	1. Institution policy for quality assurance 3. Establishing goals for quality assurance 4. Structure, organization and operation of the IQAS	1. Institution policy for quality assurance	1. Strategic Planning 2. Quality Assurance Policy	1.1 Strategic planning, feasibility and sustainability of the academic unit 2.1 Quality policy
1.2 Design and approval of programmes	<i>Examined under 5. Self-Assessment</i>	2. Design and approval of programmes	3. Design, Approval, and Monitoring of the Quality of Foreign Language Programmes	2.2 Design, approval and monitoring of the quality of new study programmes
1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	<i>Examined under 5. Self-Assessment</i>	3. Students centered learning, teaching and assessment	4. Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment	2.3 Student-Centred Learning in Teaching and Assessment

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	<i>Examined under 5. Self-Assessment</i>	4.Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	5.Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications, Award of Degrees and Certificates of Qualifications of Foreign Language Programmes	2.4.Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Academic Qualifications, Award of Degrees and Certificates of skills of New Study Programmes
1.5 Teaching staff	<i>Examined under 5. Self-Assessment</i>	5.Teaching staff	6.Ensuring High Quality of the Teaching Staff of the Foreign Language Programmes	2.5.Ensuring adequacy and high Quality of the Teaching Staff of the New study Programmes
1.6 Learning resources and student support	2.Provision and management of the necessary resources	6.Learning resources and student support	7.Learning Resources and Student Support of Foreign Language Programmes	2.6 Learning resources and student support of New Study Programmes
1.7 Information management	6.Collection of quality data: measuring, analysis and improvement	7.Information management	8.Collection, Analysis, and Use of Information for the Organization and Operation of Foreign Language Programmes	2.7 .Collection, Analysis, and Use of Information for the Organization and Operation of New Study Programmes
1.8 Public information	7.Public information	8.Public information	9.Public Information Concerning the Foreign Language Programmes	2.8.Public Information Concerning the New Study Programmes

1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	5. Self-assessment	9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	10. Periodic Internal Review of Foreign Language Programmes	2.9. Periodic Internal Review of New Study Programmes
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance	8. External evaluation and accreditation of the IQAS	10. Regular external evaluation of undergraduate programmes	11. Regular External Evaluation and Accreditation of Foreign Language Programmes	2.10 Regular External Evaluation and Accreditation of New Study Programmes

Annex VIII: Findings from IQAS & USP accreditation

Accreditation

IQAS Accreditation

From the analysis of IQAS Accreditation Reports it can be concluded that there is a number of positive and negative findings pointed out by the Accreditation Panels, despite the fact that the Internal Quality Assurance Systems of Institutions are in their infancy. The most important recommendations for addressing the respective weaknesses are:

- The systematic involvement of students in course, teaching staff, and learning environment evaluation and the utilization of this information.
- The systematic involvement of external stakeholders and utilization of their views.
- The recruitment of institutional QAU with sufficient and qualified staff and the upgrading of its role in decision making.
- The Implementation of internal evaluation in accordance with established quality assurance procedures across the range of academic and administrative activities (curricula, research, resources, services, and infrastructure).
- The improvement of quality planning and its relation to the Institution's strategy regarding (a) its scope at all levels of institutional operation and (b) its scientific and technical integrity based on these characteristics: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound (SMART)
- The systematic measurement of academic and administrative activity through suitable information systems and the utilization of this information in decision-making for continuous improvement.
- The organized and extensive dissemination of information through the Institution's website.
- The implementation of recommendations made by the expert panels in previous evaluation activities
- The hiring and provision of support for academic staff
- The need for improving institutional strategic plans, the use of KPIs and their alignment with institutional goalsetting
- The greater reliance and use of data, standardization and improvement in documenting quality processes

USP Accreditation

The above analysis shows that the Undergraduate Programs have improved significantly from the previous external evaluation of the Departments, notably in terms of updating their curricula and reducing the excessive number of courses (in cases where this was identified as a problem). At this stage, the unfavourable observations that are most frequently recorded and should be addressed immediately relate to:

- The implementation of systematic monitoring of student progress in combination with the development of methods for addressing cases of weak student performance.
- The focus on meeting students' requirements for systematic offering of courses, the possible lack of connection of theory to practice, and the lack of guidelines for study matters, such as the preparation of a dissertation report.
- The strengthening of quality orientation (e.g. documentation, utilization of students' feedback).
- The structural changes of the programme combined with its modernization.
- The maintenance of learning resources and infrastructure in good condition.
- The development of permanent alumni and external stakeholders' communication mechanisms for utilizing their views on the study program.
- The improvement of methodology, collection, data analysis, and use of information systems, and the utilization of information in curriculum improvement processes and decision making.

- The provision of systematic information to students about the results of the assessment of courses and teaching staff.
- The strengthening of mobility, openness, enhanced interaction with the labour market and the use of technology in academic processes.
- The greater teaching – research interaction.
- The recognition and rewarding of students` excellent academic performance.
- The introduction of students` welcoming activities.

Experts in Evaluation and Accreditation Committees

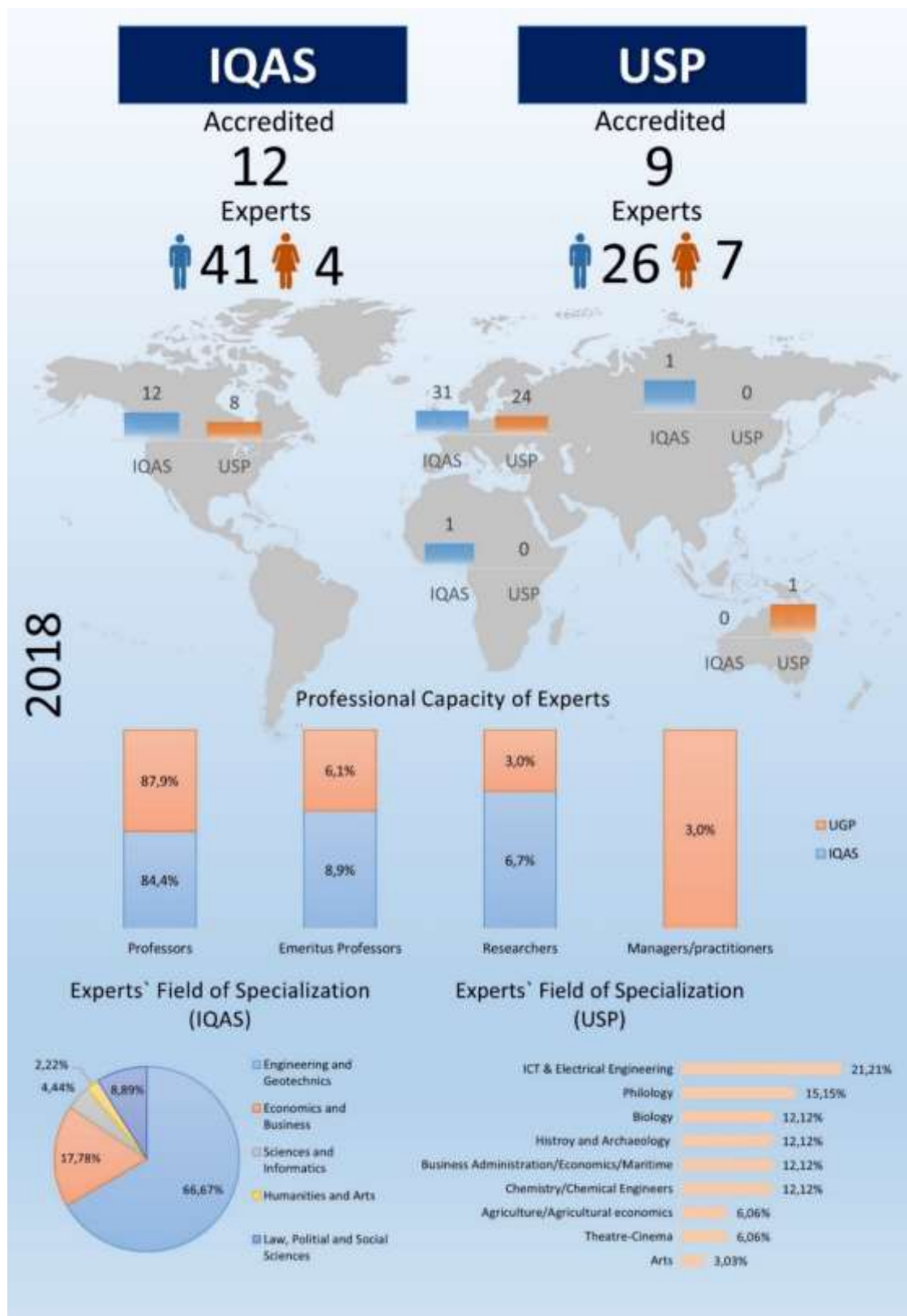


Figure 9: Accreditation Panel composition (2018)

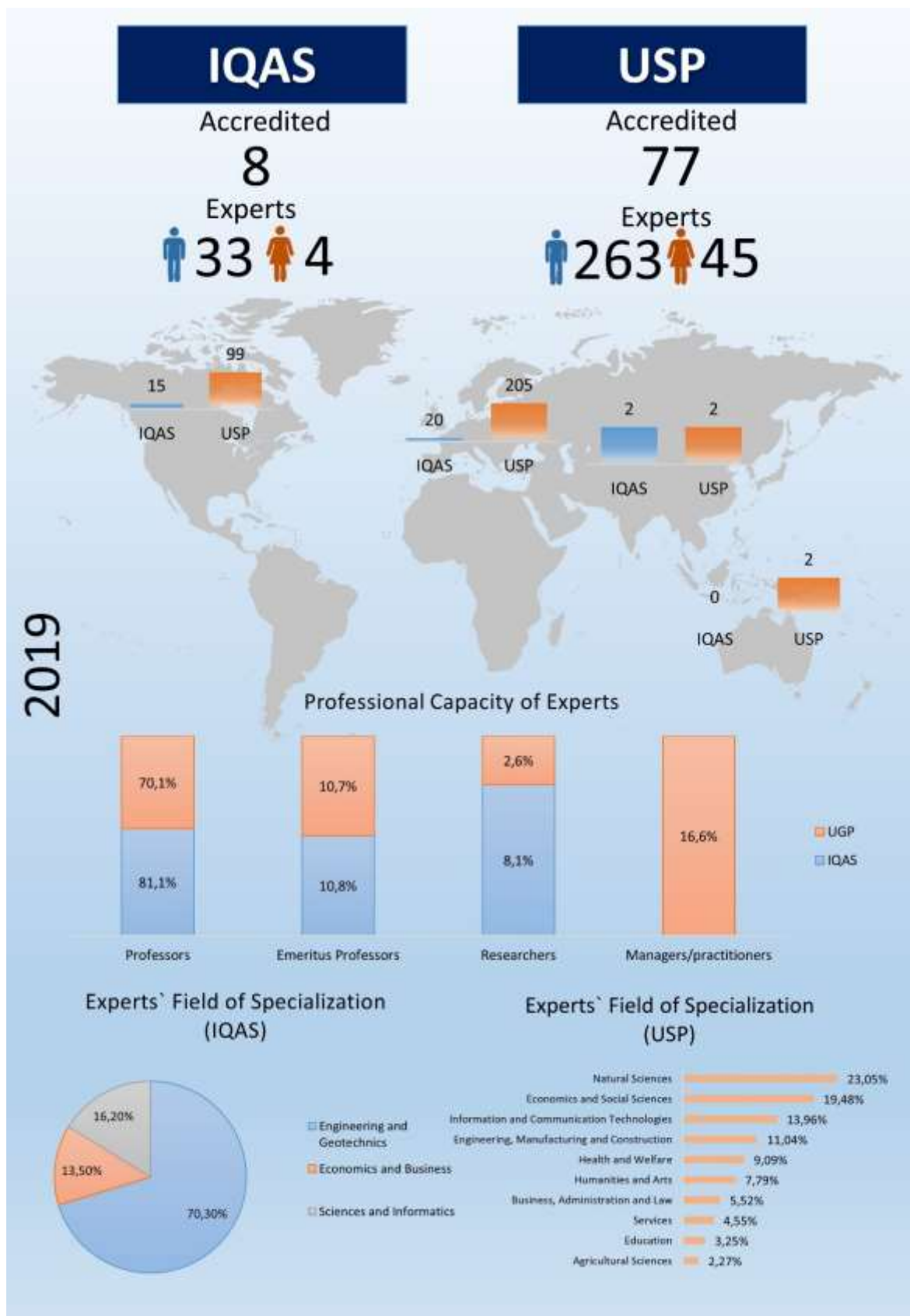


Figure 10: Accreditation Panel composition (2019)

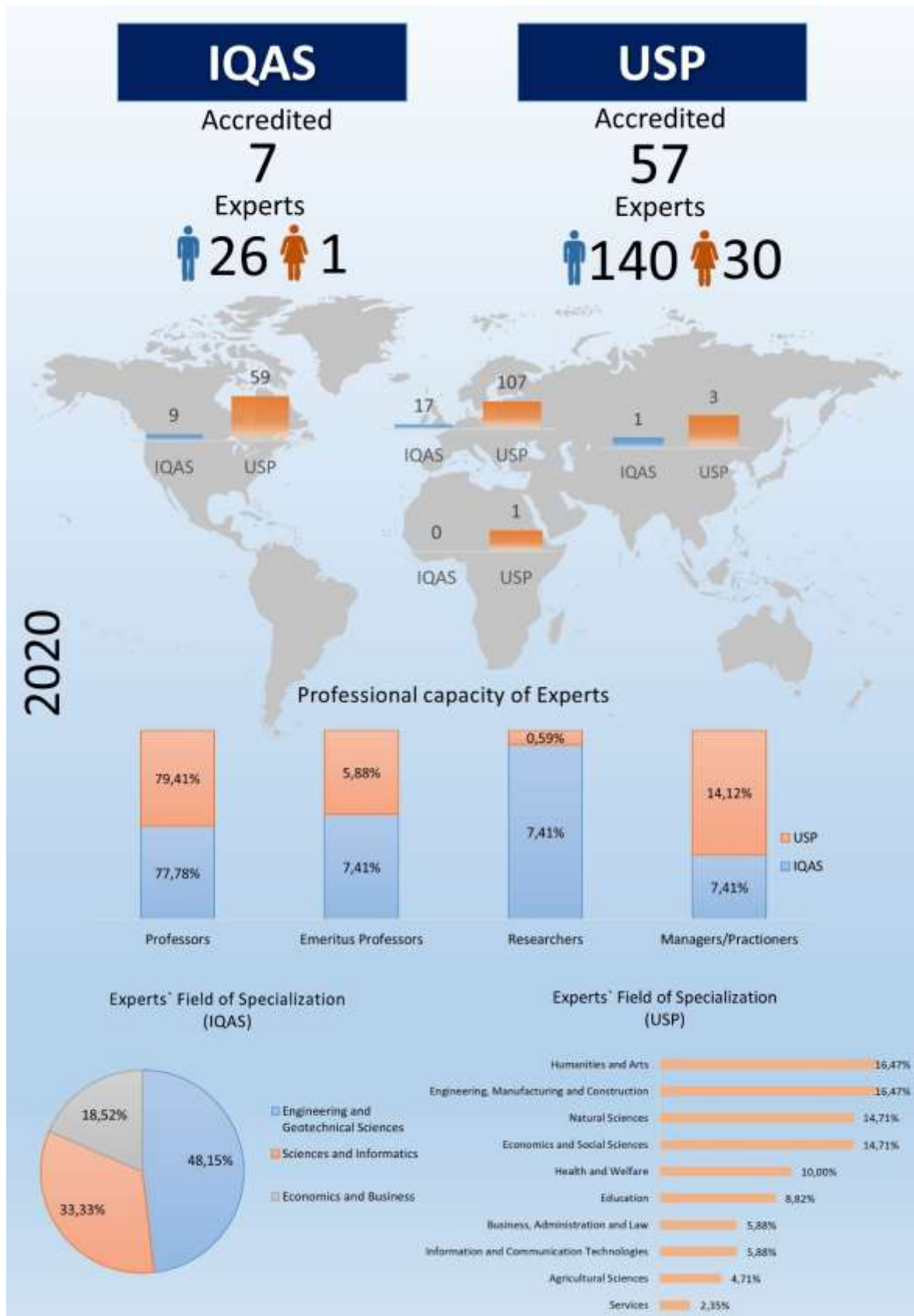


Figure 11: Accreditation Panel composition (2020)

Annex IX: List of Documents

Legislation

- Law 3374/2005
- Law 4009/2011
- Law 4653/2020

Manuals

- HAHE – IQAS Manual
- HAHE – Manual of Operations
- IQAS Manual for Higher Education Institutions
- Data Manual (National Information System for Quality Assurance in Higher Education)
- Quality Indicators` Manual

Accreditation Documents

- IQAS Accreditation Standard
- Undergraduate Study Programme Accreditation Standard
- Foreign Language Study Programme Accreditation Standard
- New Study Programme Standard
- Accreditation Guide
- Guidelines for the Accreditation Panel
- Template for the Accreditation Proposal/Report (IQAS, Undergraduate Study Programme, Foreign Study Programme/New Study Programme)
- Mapping Grid (IQAS & Study Programme) (IQAS, Undergraduate Study Programme, Foreign Study Programme, New Study Programme)
- Questionnaire for Experts (feedback)
- Code of Ethics
- Invitation Letter (for Experts)
- Letter to HEIs
- On-line review procedure by the use of electronic means

Reports & Decisions

- HQA & HAHE Annual Reports (2015-2019)
- IQAS & Study Programmes Accreditation Reports & Decisions
- Quality Indicators Reports Templates (Institutions, Departments, Study Programmes)

HAHE Accreditation Reports

- Self-evaluation report (2014)
- Follow up report (2017)

Annex X: Accreditation Plan 2021 (Jan – Jun 2021)

ACCREDITATION PLAN (JAN-JUN 2021)		
	Institution	IQAS - USP
1	Panteion University of Social and Politcal Sciences	IQAS Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences
1	University of Thessaly	Veterinary Science
2	University of Piraeus	Informatics
3	University of Ioannina	History and Archaeology
4	Democritus University of Thrace	Production Engineering and Management
5	Hellenic Open University	Business Administration
6	University of the Aegean	Cultural Technology and Communication
7	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Chemical Engineering
8	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Agriculture
9	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Electronics and Computer Engineering
10	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Physics
11	University of Piraeus	Statistics and Insurance Science
12	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Informatics
13	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Mathematics
14	University of Crete	Medicine
15	Democritus University of Thrace	Architecture
16	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Economics
17	National Technical University of Athens	Electrical and Computer Engineering
18	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Biology
19	National Technical University of Athens	Civil Engineering
20	University of the Aegean	Financial and Management Engineering
21	Hellenic Open University	Natural Sciences
22	Democritus University of Thrace	Language, Literature and Civilization of the Black Sea Countries
23	National Technical University of Athens	Mechanical Engineering
24	University of Crete	Philology
25	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Music Studies
26	University of Crete	Primary Education
27	University of Western Macedonia	Mechanical Engineering
28	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Journalism and Mass Communication
29	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Spatial Planning and Development
30	Athens School of Fine Arts	Fine Arts
31	National Technical University of Athens	Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering
32	University of the Aegean	Product and Systems Design Engineering
33	National and Capodistrian University of Athens	Dentistry
34	National and Capodistrian University of Athens	Communication and Media Studies
35	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Architecture
36	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	History and Archaeology
37	National and Technical University of Athens	Mining and Metallurgical Engineering
38	University of Ioannina	Primary Education
39	National and Capodistrian University of Athens	Law
40	University of Ioannina	Fine Arts and Art Sciences
41	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Dentistry
42	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Physical Education and Sports Science
43	National and Technical University of Athens	Applied Mathematics and Physical Sciences
44	National and Technical University of Athens	Chemical Engineering
45	University of Macedonia	Accounting and Finance
46	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Law
47	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Visual and Applied Arts
48	National and Capodistrian University of Athens	Primary Education
49	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Geology
50	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Primary Education
51	National and Capodistrian University of Athens	French Language and Literature
52	Agricultural University of Athens	Food Science and Human Nutrition
53	University of the Aegean	Shipping, Trade and Transport
54	National and Technical University of Athens	Architecture
55	University of Macedonia	Education and Socia Policy
56	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	French Language and Literature
57	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Drama
58	Panteion University of Social and Politcal Sciences	Social Policy

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: The Greek higher education in 2020.....	6
Figure 2: The Greek educational system & a snapshot of Greek HE performance.....	15
Figure 3: HAHE Organization Chart.....	18
Figure 4 : HAHE in a nutshell (2020).....	48
Figure 5 : Accreditation Results 2018	80
Figure 6 : Accreditation Results 2019.....	81
Figure 7 : Accreditation Results 2020.....	82
Figure 9: Accreditation: Experts` Feedback.....	90
Figure 10: Accreditation Panel composition (2018).....	96
Figure 11: Accreditation Panel composition (2019).....	97
Figure 12: Accreditation Panel composition (2020).....	98
Table 1: Universities with changes in their academic structure.....	7
Table 2: The Hellenic Qualifications Framework	10
Table 3: Quality assurance activities (by year)	24
Table 5 : HAHE Regular Budget 2010-2019.....	49
Table 6 : HAHE Regular Budget 2020	49
Table 7: Financial data NSRF 2020.....	50
Table 8: Timeline of the SAR Preparation (June: Week 1-4, July: Week 5-7, September: Week 8).....	78
Table 10: IQAS compliance by principle	79
Table 11: Study programme compliance by principle.....	79
Table 12: Recommendations, changes and improvements	86
Table 13: Indicative list of HAHE Stakeholders	89
Table 14: ESG-HAHE Standards alignment	91

