



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC)

Governance Terms

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PREAMBLE

Education quality at all levels is a key to poverty reduction and economic growth. Stakeholders frequently lack reliable information about the quality of the education being provided. Governments wish to assure stakeholders that students are receiving a minimum standard of quality. The heterogeneity of higher education makes it more difficult to assess, monitor, and develop strategies for quality improvements than at lower levels of education.

Quality assurance (QA) in higher education is a systematic process of assessing and verifying inputs, outputs, and outcomes against standardized benchmarks of quality to maintain and enhance quality, ensure greater accountability and facilitate harmonization of standards across academic programs, institutions, and systems. QA can take many forms, ranging from simple self-assessment to more comprehensive inspection, accreditation, review, or audit supported by external, independent peer review. Building capacity for quality assurance that meets international standards requires a significant investment in technical assistance, training, knowledge sharing, analysis, and coordination that are costly and time-consuming.

QA is typically conducted by QA agencies - government and NGO bodies. Nevertheless, there is a need to strengthen capacity for quality assessment in many developing countries. Support for sharing global knowledge and technical assistance could help generate such capacity. Experience shows that development of effective QA capacity benefits from global exchanges of quality assurance specialists, joint training exercises, and the seamless sharing of documents, templates, and good practices.

The World Bank and UNESCO have established a partnership to support a Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC) which aims to support capacity building in quality assurance of higher education in developing countries and in countries in transition. Initial seed funding for this Initiative comes from the World Bank's Development Grant Facility (DGF) Window 2 and from UNESCO through substantial in-kind support. A formal agreement has been signed between the World Bank and UNESCO as the overall framework for financing and implementation.

It was agreed that this project would aim to consolidate a disparate set of World Bank DGF grants to establish a global support mechanism for regional networks. Through the DGF the World Bank has supported existing regional quality assurance networks in Africa, East Asia / South Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. GIQAC will not only consolidate existing support, but open support opportunities to regional QA networks in Europe and Central Asia and the Arab States regions, thereby providing each region the opportunity to access resources.

UNESCO, as the only UN organization with an explicit mandate in higher education, is linked with ministries, international agencies, implementing partners and partners in 194 countries, placing it in a position to achieve its mission to provide leadership, standard setting, and capacity building in higher education. GIQAC would aim to build on UNESCO's work through the Global Forum on International Quality Assurance and the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education.

1. GOALS, PURPOSES AND ACTIVITIES OF GIQAC

1.1 Goal

The goal of GIQAC is to build capacity to engender robust quality assurance practices and systems in developing countries and territories as well as countries in transition by supporting training and knowledge-sharing activities; such activities shall be proposed and undertaken by autonomous regional and international nonprofit networks of quality assurance professionals and institutions.

1.2 Purposes

- i) To serve as a worldwide vehicle to build capacity for quality assurance of higher education in developing countries and territories as well as countries in transition;
- ii) To support regional knowledge-sharing to build capacity for quality assurance in developing countries and territories as well as countries in transition and engender a coherent global programme of activities;
- iii) To assist emerging quality assurance systems in building capacity by sharing information on good practices from around the world, facilitating communication among the diverse set of agencies and professionals, and supporting the production of analyses and guidelines.

1.3. Activities

Activities expected to be supported by GIQAC include:

- i) Development of international clearinghouses of information on quality assurance practices in multiple languages including the publication, storage, and dissemination of up-to-date information;
- ii) Development of other internet-based knowledge-sharing and capacity building tools for quality assurance;
- iii) Development of global working groups to discuss and share information on key issues (e.g. harmonization and recognition of competencies and credentials; cross-border tertiary education; student learning assessment and measurement of learning outcomes, etc.);
- iv) Regional seminars for enhancement of quality assurance capacity;
- v) Policy dialogue for countries that lack quality assurance systems and are not members of existing QA networks;
- vi) Training for external reviewers in developing countries to undertake QA exercises in their home countries;
- vii) International staff exchanges of QA professionals to provide and receive technical assistance to build QA capacity in developing countries.

2. GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

2.1 Steering Committee

The GIQAC Steering Committee (SC) shall consist of no fewer than nine yet no more than 15 members representing relevant partner IGOs, NGOs, implementing partners, experts and donor agencies. The initial membership of the SC shall include representatives, or their delegates, from the following entities:

- i) World Bank
- ii) UNESCO

- iii) Commonwealth of Learning (COL)
- iv) German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)
- v) Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC)
- vi) Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research
- vii) New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
- viii) Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)
- ix) Center for Comparative Education Systems and Policy, Universidad Diego Portales, Chile
- x) International Association of Universities (IAU)

INQAAHE shall have the status of ‘special observer’.

Any new members to the SC shall be agreed upon by a consensus of the SC. All SC members shall be responsible for covering the costs of their own travel and expenses to SC meetings. There shall be two programme managers of GIQAC (one from the World Bank, one from UNESCO).

2.2 GIQAC Steering Committee Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the SC shall consist of but not be limited to:

- i) Setting the mission, vision, and strategic plan for GIQAC;
- ii) Reviewing, and adopting the GIQAC Operational Procedures Manual (OPM) and other policies or procedures to facilitate GIQAC’s work;
- iii) Reviewing, and approving GIQAC’s annual work programme and budget, developed in consultation with the Secretariat ;
- iv) Monitoring and evaluating GIQAC programmes and activities;
- v) Overseeing the work of the GIQAC Secretariat;
- vi) Providing guidance to the GIQAC Secretariat in the review and evaluation of proposals for GIQAC support;
- vii) Providing guidance to the Secretariat in the monitoring and evaluation of GIQAC-supported activities carried out by regional and international networks;
- viii) Establishing and dissolving advisory committees;
- ix) Mobilizing external resources and guiding the Secretariat in the development of a fiscal and programmatic sustainability plan for GIQAC.

2.3 Organization of the Work

Selection of officers

The SC shall have a Chair and a Vice-Chair selected from among its members for a term of one year. To facilitate the establishment of GIQAC, the World Bank shall act as the Chair of the SC for the first year. The SC shall mutually agree on a Vice-Chair at its first meeting. Thereafter, SC members shall mutually agree on the Chair and Vice-Chair for ensuing years. The Chair convenes SC meetings and interacts with the Secretariat. The SC shall meet at least once per year. Decision making will be done by consensus of all members present and by no objection after one week. The SC may make decisions by email between in-person meetings based on reasonable no objection periods.

Advisory Committees

When necessary and as determined by the SC, advisory committees may be formed for specific tasks. The SC will create such advisory committees and provide them with approved terms of reference. Such advisory committees may solicit the advice of experts and stakeholders drawn from the global quality assurance community, higher education institutions, government ministries, implementing partners, and international agencies. Participation of external parties is by invitation from the SC with due consideration of potential conflicts of interest.

2.4 Conduct of Business

Duties of the Chair

In addition to exercising the powers which are conferred upon him/her under any other provisions of the present document, the Chair shall open and close each plenary meeting. He/she shall direct the discussions, ensure observance of the terms of this document, accord the right to speak, put questions up for debate and announce decisions. He/she shall rule on points of order and manage the proceedings. If the Chair is absent during a meeting or any part thereof, his/her place shall be taken by the Vice Chair who, acting as Chair, shall have the same powers and duties as the Chair.

Quorum

Steering Committee meetings require a quorum of a majority of the members of the SC present at the meeting. No objection decision making requires that no objection remain at the time the specified period has elapsed.

Proposals

Proposals for discussion items may be presented by any member of the SC and shall be transmitted in writing to the Secretariat (as defined below), which shall circulate copies to all members of the SC. Materials for SC meetings shall be circulated reasonably in advance of the meetings.

Working Language

The working language of GIQAC shall be English.

Decision-Making

SC decisions shall be made by consensus.

Records

The Secretariat shall act as meeting rapporteur. After the closure of the SC meeting, the Secretariat shall circulate a draft minutes for review and confirmation by the SC members participating in the meeting. A final approved version of the minutes shall be circulated to all members of the SC and will be made public.

Conflict of Interest Policy

Any member of the SC, who represents or has a potential conflict of interest concerning an entity that has submitted a proposal for funding, shall not participate in the deliberations of the SC on that application. Members of the SC shall indicate as soon as possible and in any event before the start of the assessment of proposals by the SC, if they are in a potential conflict of interest with respect to an application for funding under consideration. No

beneficiary of the GIQAC competitive fund can be a member of the GIQAC SC. The SC may develop additional conflict of interest procedures.

2.5 GIQAC Secretariat

Secretariat

UNESCO shall serve as the GIQAC Secretariat. The GIQAC Secretariat will be hosted by UNESCO's Division of Higher Education (HED). The Secretariat responsibilities shall include:

- i) Supporting the SC in its meetings and activities; this will include organizing all SC meetings, liaising with the Chair and members as necessary, preparing and circulating minutes for deliberation;
- ii) Receiving and managing the grant resources received from the World Bank Development Grant Facility for GIQAC activities;
- iii) In close consultation with the GIQAC SC, preparing an annual work programme and budget for review and approval by the SC. The GIQAC work programme shall include administrative processing of annual proposals for allocating GIQAC resources (including DGF and other resources) to regional and global networks for capacity building activities in quality assurance. The annual work programme must be submitted to SC members at least 2 weeks prior to the annual meeting;
- iv) Issuing annual Requests for Proposals to regional and global networks for quality assurance, preparing all received proposals for SC deliberation, coordinating the SC review, and allocating GIQAC resources to support Cooperation Agreements between UNESCO and regional / global networks for quality assurance to ensure the delivery of programmes for capacity building in quality assurance in developing countries;
- v) Providing SC members with semi-annual narrative and financial reports on the activities implemented and on funds disbursed by UNESCO in support of GIQAC;
- vi) Developing and maintaining the GIQAC website;
- vii) Supervising activities financed from GIQAC resources disbursed by UNESCO;
- viii) Commissioning an independent evaluation every three years to assess GIQAC activities;
- ix) Assisting the SC in the mobilization of external resources.