

# Republic of Serbia

*Self-assessment report  
of  
Commission for accreditation and  
quality assurance (CAQA)  
2017*



**CAQA**

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT OF THE  
COMMISSION FOR ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE  
2017

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## 1. Introduction

Dynamic adaptation of the higher education system towards European and international standards aimed towards transforming Serbian society into a knowledge-based society, transformation towards the Bologna system of education and, finally, the change in the Law on Higher Education in 2005, were in the recent period reasons for establishing the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) as it is now. To respond to the challenges mentioned above in the best possible manner, CAQA has intensively developed its expertise, learning from European and international best practice, as well as from its own experience in quality assurance procedures. This required accountability and focus towards constant and guided improvement of the academic community. Since establishment, CAQA has been continuously raising awareness of the academic community regarding quality culture in Serbian higher education. For CAQA it is of essential importance to recognize the needs of all stakeholders through developing quality communication and to have them involved in structuring the mechanisms for quality assurance in higher education.

Nowadays CAQA acts as a major stakeholder in the area of higher education in Serbia as well as a driving force fostering improvements. CAQA has also been recognized in both, ENQA and EQAR by its activities and achievements. Since April 2013 CAQA became a full member of ENQA and since December 2014 CAQA was registered in EQAR. At the CAQA meeting in December 2016 it was decided that official request should be made for ENQA evaluation to renew the status of ENQA member as well as to be registered in EQAR again. Eligibility confirmation was given by EQAR in April 2017. In the past 5 years CAQA has paid a special effort to alleviate shortcomings stated in the ENQA board membership decision. The recommendations of both, ENQA and EQAR, were carefully considered.

## **2. Development of the self-assessment report**

For the purpose of making the self-evaluation report, a working group was formed at CAQA with the task of drafting the document. The working group consisted of 3 members: prof. Sofija Pekic Quarrie from the previous and the present CAQA and contact person in ENQA, and two from the present CAQA: prof Vesna Kuntić and prof Mirko Savić. They are from different scientific fields: social studies and humanities, natural sciences and medical sciences, which made possible a comprehensive view on the evaluation. Each group member was in charge of a particular part of self-evaluation, followed by joint meetings where the proposed content was commented on and edited, and supplemented with parts written jointly by the whole team. During preparation of the self-evaluation report, working group had eight meetings. Three experts (national and international) were also involved during the drafting process: prof Vera Vujčić, prof Dušica Pavlović and prof Steve Quarrie. To involve the largest number possible of stakeholders in the drafting process, CAQA decided to conduct a survey among its stakeholders on the extent to which it fulfils its tasks and contributes to the overall improvements of HE in Serbia. The preparations for the evaluation process including the content of the self-assessment report were presented at the meeting of National Council for Higher Education on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2017.

The draft of the self-evaluation report was accepted at the CAQA meeting on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2017.

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

#### 3.1. An outline of the national higher education system

Higher education in Serbia is a part of the national educational system of the classical type: pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education. The length of the primary school programme is eight, and secondary (grammar, vocational and art schools) is four years. From 2000 onwards, higher education institutions in Serbia have become involved in the European trends of reforms and harmonization in the field of higher education – the Bologna process. In September 2003, Serbia officially signed the Bologna Declaration and the main principles of it were incorporated in the [Law on Higher Education \(LoHE\)](#) (Annex 1) that came into the force two years later, in September 2005. That law which introduced a QA system in Serbia, was amended several times, with the last changes regarding QA made in 2015 as explained in [section 5.2](#).

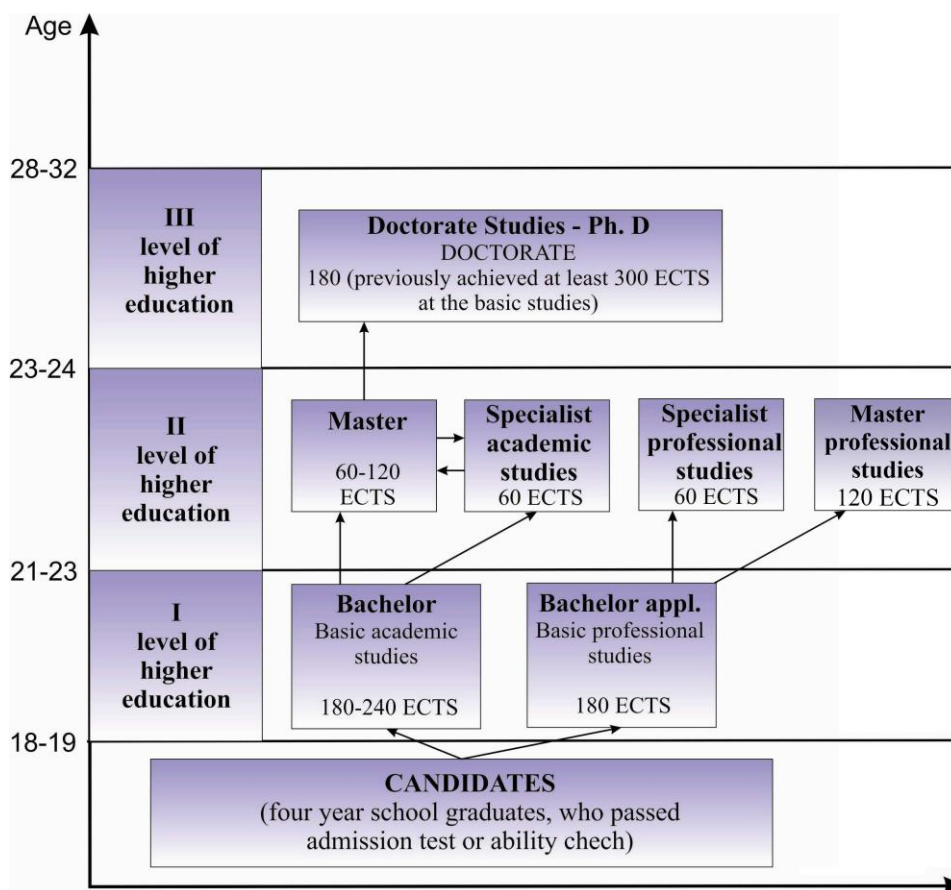
By adopting the main principles of the Bologna process, Serbia committed itself to become a full member of the European Higher Education Area. A three-cycle education process, accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and its programmes, mobility of students, professors and staff, as well as recognition of diplomas have been the main pillars of Serbian reform.

#### 3.2. Degree structure

Higher education activities are carried out through academic and professional career courses based on accredited study programmes for acquiring higher education degrees. There are 3 levels of studies (degrees) in our HE system (presented in scheme 1):

- The first level includes: basic academic and basic professional studies.
- The second level includes: master academic and master professional studies specialistic academic studies and specialistic professional studies.
- The third level includes doctoral academic studies.

Each course within a study programme is assigned a number of ECTS credits, and the scope of the studies as a whole is expressed as the aggregate ECTS credits. A total of 60 ECTS credits should correspond to an average of 40 h per student for the work done each week during an academic year. ECTS credits may be transferred between study programmes, but only for courses of the same type. The criteria and conditions for the transfer of ECTS credits are determined in the general act of an independent HEI or in an agreement reached between HEIs. [LoHE](#) offers the possibility of acquiring a joined diploma or degree organized and implemented by several HEIs.



Scheme 1. Degree structure of Serbian HE

**Bachelor** - Basic studies are organized by all HEIs and last three to four years. The total number of credits earned in this cycle can be 180 to 240 depending on the length of the study programme (3 or 4 years). The degree for basic professional studies should be completed in three years. The study programme of basic studies can include a final paper. A person who finishes the basic academic studies and earns 180 credits acquires the professional title that includes the name of the profession of the first degree academic studies in the corresponding area - *bachelor*. If a person earns 240 credits, he or she acquires the title *bachelor with honours*. A person who finishes the basic professional studies acquires the professional title that includes the name of the profession of the first degree of the professional studies in the corresponding area - *bachelor appl.*

**Master and Specialistic studies** - Master and specialist academic studies can be organized by a university, faculty or higher school (college and polytechnic). Master degree academic studies last one or two years depending on the duration of the basic studies. Study programmes of master academic studies contain an obligation to create a master thesis. A person who finishes master academic studies acquires the academic title - *master*, with the name of the profession of the second degree of academic studies in a corresponding area. The number of ECTS that can be earned in this cycle is 60 to 120. Master professional studies last 2 years with minimum 120 ECTS. A person who finishes master professional studies acquires the academic title - *master (appl)*, with the name of the profession of the second degree of academic studies in a corresponding area. Specialistic academic studies last one year with 60 ECTS. Specialistic professional studies can be organised by a university, faculty, higher school of academic studies or higher school of professional studies. The number of ECTS that could be earned is 60.



**Integrated studies (one cycle programme)** - Academic study programmes can be organized and integrated within basic and master academic studies with 300 ECTS. One-cycle study programmes in the field of medicine can be organized with 360 ECTS.

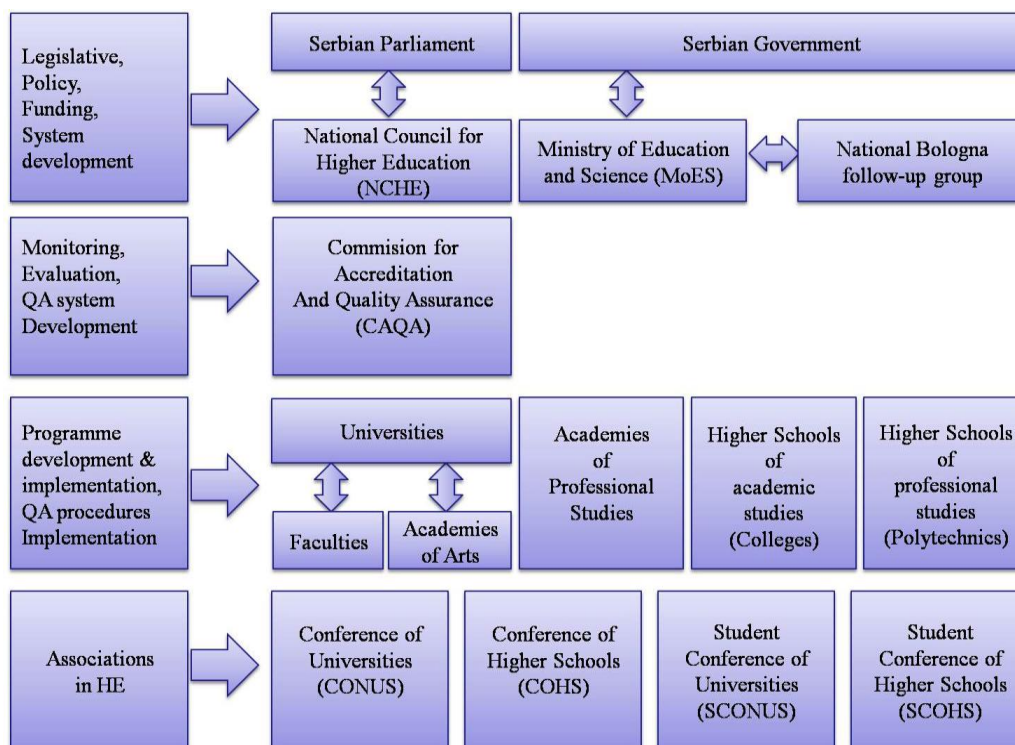
**PhD studies** - PhD studies can be organized by universities and faculties. PhD studies are carried out for at least three years with previous basic and master academic studies. Serbia has adopted the ECTS system for PhD studies. The number of ECTS that should be earned is 180, if the candidate has at least 300 ECTS collected in previous levels of education. A PhD dissertation is the final part of the study programme of PhD studies, with the exception of a PhD in the Arts which is an artistic project.

### Grading system

A student's achievement in a specific subject is continuously assessed during the teaching process as well as at the end of the course (final exam) and it is expressed in points. By fulfilling the duties preceding an exam and passing the exams, a student can achieve a maximum of 100 points. Every course establishes the proportion of points earned for the pre-exam duties and for the exam, the pre-exam duties being worth a minimum of 30 and maximum of 70 points. A student's success is assessed by grades from 5 (failed) to 10 (excellent). An institution of higher education can establish a different, non-numeric method of grading, by establishing the relation between these grades and those from 5 to 10. A general act of an institution of higher education defines more closely the way in which exams are taken and grading.

### 3.3. Institutional structure of higher education in Serbia

Relevant bodies in the system of Serbian higher education including their responsibilities are presented in Scheme 2:



Scheme 2. Relevant bodies in the system of Serbian HE

### 3.3.1. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

According to the LoHE, activities in the area of higher education are carried out by both: state and private higher education institutions that are equally treated. The total number of accredited HEIs in the Republic of Serbia is 212.

*Universities* – are carrying out activities combining educational and scientific-research, professional and/or artistic work. According to the [LoHE](#), a university has to have accredited academic study programmes in at least 3 scientific/artistic fields at all 3 levels. The LoHE gives certain integrative functions to the universities. There are 17 accredited universities in Serbia, of which 8 are founded by state and 9 are private universities. State universities enrol 83% of the student population.

*Faculties or Academies of arts within universities* - are higher education units within a university carrying out academic study programmes and developing scientific-research, professional and/or artistic work in one or more areas. The Law provides the possibility for individual faculties/academies to act as legal bodies if they have at least 3 accredited study programmes. All faculties and academies of arts which are legal entities count as HEIs and are subjects of institutional accreditation. The total number of accredited faculties is 125 (87 state and 38 private), of which 70% are state-owned faculties.

*Academies of professional studies* - are carrying out their activities combining educational, research, professional and artistic work. According to the [LoHE](#), an academy has to have 5 accredited professional study programmes in at least 3 scientific/artistic fields. There are no such HEIs in Serbia, so far.

*Higher schools of academic studies (Colleges of academic studies)* - have basic academic, specialist and master degree courses in one or more areas within scientific/artistic fields defined by the [LoHE](#). There are 5 accredited such HEIs in Serbia.

*Higher schools of professional studies (Colleges of professional studies)* – offer basic professional and specialist professional courses in one or more areas within scientific/artistic fields defined by the Law. There are 65 accredited such HEIs in Serbia, of which 70% are state-owned.

### 3.3.2. National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)

It is established by the National Assembly to ensure the development and promotion of quality of higher education in Serbia, particularly in the creation of strategy and policies concerning higher education and its harmonization with European and international standards (Articles 9-12, [LoHE](#)). The Council has 21 members who are elected by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. The NCHE elects members of CAQA on the recommendation of CONUS. The NCHE approves QA standards, rules and regulations defined by CAQA.

### 3.3.3. Conference of Universities (CONUS) and Conference of higher schools (COHS)

These bodies are established for the purpose of coordinating work, formulation of common policies, realization of shared interests and for carrying out the tasks defined by the [LoHE](#) (Articles 18 and 19 for CONUS and 20 and 21 for COHS).

All rectors of Serbian universities are members of CONUS and all higher school principals are members of COHS. CONUS recommends the members of CAQA to the NCHE.

### 3.3.4. Student Conference of Universities (SCONUS) and Student Conference of higher schools (SCOHS)

These bodies are established to pursue the common interests of students as partners in the process of developing higher education as defined by the [LoHE](#) (Article 22). SCONUS and SCOHS provide lists of student evaluators taking part in the site visits of HEIs for the purpose of accreditation and external QA.

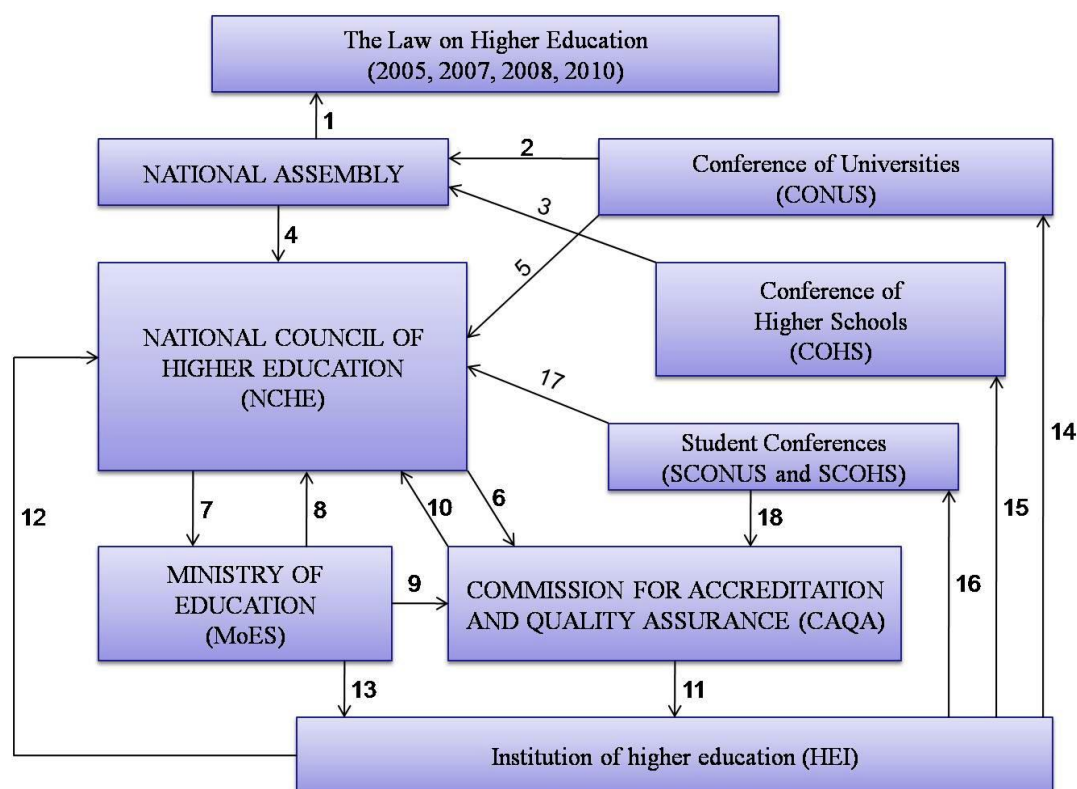
### 3.3.5. Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoES)

The Ministry is responsible for overseeing the development of higher education by recommending higher education policies to the Government, issuing operating licences, administrative supervision of higher education, keeping records on the register of professors. On the basis of the certificate for accreditation of an HEI given by CAQA, the Ministry automatically issues the operating licence and performs administrative supervision. The Ministry does not have the right to change accreditation decisions made by CAQA. The Ministry provides administrative and technical support to the CAQA.

### 3.3.6. National Assembly (Parliament)

The Parliament elects members of the NCHE and adopts the document that defines the system of higher education - LoHE.

The structure of the QA system in Serbia involving all relevant parties is presented in Scheme 3.



Scheme 3. Links between the relevant parties in the QA system in Serbia

1 - passes, 2 and 3 - recommends NCHE members, 4 elects NCHE members, 5 - recommends CAQA members, 6 - elects CAQA members, 7- creates HE policies, 8 and 9 - provides administrative and technical support, 10 - reports, 11 - evaluates (accredits, warns, rejects), 12 - appeals, 13 - gives operating licence, 14 - delegates rector, 15 - delegates director, 16, 17 and 18 - delegates student representative

### 3.4. Status of higher education institutions in relation to the government

The status of state and private HEIs in relation to the government differs as the government is the founder of state HEIs and it covers the material costs of their activities, enables free of charge studies for a certain number of students, gives salaries to the staff, provides finances for improving teaching activities, etc. Regarding QA, the government has the same responsibility towards all HEIs – giving the work permit after the decision of accreditation is brought, performing inspections of the financial and material management of HEIs, etc. All HEIs undergo the same accreditation procedures.

### 3.5. Procedures and involved parties in establishing new institutions, programmes and subjects

Founding a new HEI requires the fulfilment of a number of conditions defined by the LoHE and [Rules on standards for initial accreditation](#) regarding the number of permanent teaching staff, number and area of study programmes, infrastructure etc.

The founder then prepares the documentation defined by CAQA rules and regulations, and after the accreditation procedure performed by CAQA, including a site visit, a decision on initial accreditation or refusal of the request is brought by CAQA. A positive decision on initial accreditation of the HEI is sent to the MoES for issuing an operating licence to the HEI that is valid only one year. After that HEI has to undergo regular accreditation procedure.

A new study programme has to undergo the whole accreditation procedure. Once given accreditation, followed by operating licence by MoES, a HEI can enrol students in the study programme.

Accredited HEIs and study programmes are subject to re-accreditation every 5 years. In between two accreditation cycles HEIs have to undergo external quality assessment by CAQA, in a form of auditing with the developed follow-up procedure.

The usual procedure for establishing new subjects (courses) in already-existing and accredited study programmes is that the decision bodies of the HEI (council of faculty and university senate, or college council) approve the establishment of new subjects (courses).

### 3.6. Internal quality assurance in HEIs

[LoHE](#) Article 17 established an obligation of self-evaluation upon HE institutions. According to accreditation standards, every HEI has to have a body for QA called “Commission for Quality Assurance and Self-evaluation”. The composition of that body, also defined by the above-mentioned document, consists of teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students. The role of students in the self-evaluation report is additionally strengthened by the requirement of the [LoHE](#) (Article 17) for their compulsory input in evaluating the quality of an HEI as a result of student surveys. Its activities are regulated by HEI statutes. A regular activity of this body is to run and analyze student questionnaires at the end of every term for every subject. The HEI also does its own SWOT analysis for a self-evaluation report. This body is the team for preparation of the self-evaluation report.

Self-evaluation of an HEI is an obligatory process according to the [LoHE](#), article 17 and is performed periodically every three years according to self-evaluation standards. The set of [Standards for self-evaluation](#) (Annex 9) together with the [Guidelines for the preparation of self-evaluation reports](#) to help HEIs in preparing a self-evaluation report. The self-evaluation report is made to control the quality of study programmes, teaching and working conditions. Internal assessment should be carried out at intervals of three years maximum and should include student’s comments and opinions. As a part of the processes of external quality control and accreditation of an institution, an HEI has to submit self-evaluation report to CAQA together with other necessary documentation.

## 4. History, profile and activities of the agency

### 4.1. History of the agency

The first Commission for accreditation was formed in 2002 by the first democratic government led by Zoran Đinđić who was the first president of the National Council for Higher Education. The major activities of this Commission were the evaluation of the newly-formed private HEIs as well as the creation of the first document on accreditation criteria and procedures in 2004.

The Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA), as it is now, was established by the LoHE adopted in 2005 (Official Gazette no 76/2005 with amendments in 2007 and 2010 and last changes regarding QA in 2015). CAQA members in the first mandate were elected in June 2006, in the second mandate in March 2011 and in the third in June 2015.

At the beginning of the first mandate in 2006, CAQA developed the documents related to the quality assurance processes: Rules and regulations, standards, guidelines, instructions. During 2006 and 2007 a pool of reviewers was created by conducting training seminars together with briefings of HEIs on how to prepare accreditation documentation. At that time it was necessary to provide a legal basis for the operation of the existing state HEIs, as well as for the growing number of private HEIs by the accreditation of both institutions and their study programmes under the same criteria and procedures.

Since 2007, the first and the second accreditation round have been completed as well as the first round of audit, and the third round has been started. In total 212 HEIs have been accredited. Until the end of 2016 CAQA has completed 5234 evaluations out of which 4401 (1947 in the first round and 2454 in the second) were requests for study programme accreditation.

### 4.2. CAQA mission statement and tasks

The [Mission](#) of the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) is to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of Serbian HE, to comply with internationally-accepted quality standards, to create a pool of trained reviewers for the process of accreditation and external quality control and to act as the main driving force for the development of quality assurance in the HE of Western Balkan countries by fostering cooperation between agencies in the region. The mission was officially adopted by CAQA and published on its web-site.

CAQA, since its establishment, actively participates in a whole variety of tasks aimed at implementing changes and reforms in the field of quality assurance in HE. According to the LoHE, the tasks and competences of the CAQA in relation to its mission are as follows:



1. Carries out the accreditation procedure for HE institutions and study programmes, decides on the application for accreditation and issues a certificate of accreditation
2. Carries out the audit and follow-up procedure and brings reports
3. Creates standards and recommends them to the National Council
4. Assists and cooperates with higher education institutions in assuring and promoting quality assurance
5. Assists stakeholders (students, labour market and government representatives, etc) in understanding the importance of quality assurance
6. Creates a pool of evaluators
7. Endeavours to ensure that accreditation standards and procedures conform to those of the European Higher Education Area;
8. Reports on initial accreditation in the process of licensing of new HEIs by the MoES
9. Cooperates with other national and international QA agencies

To accomplish its mission, CAQA cooperates with the NCHE, MoES and other state bodies and higher education institutions, educational and scientific research institutions, labour market and student organizations. The Commission endeavours to establish an active cooperation with similar institutions and organizations in other European countries aiming to implement fully the Bologna declaration guidelines and to establish the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

#### 4.3. Description of the legal framework and other formal regulations concerning the agency

Foundation of the CAQA is provided by the Law on Higher Education ([LoHE](#)), for the purpose of quality enhancement of higher education institutions and study programmes. The novelty, introduced by this Law, was that CAQA was explicitly established by the [LoHE](#) (Article 13), and is independent in its decision-making process either in giving accreditation to the institution, giving an act of warning or rejecting it.

The work of the Commission is governed by the [LoHE](#), Articles 13-17. The documents that regulate CAQA activities are: [Rules of CAQA's work](#) (Annex 3), [Standards of CAQA's work](#) (Annex 2) and Code of ethics. All CAQA members, staff and reviewers are obliged to obey these 3 documents and to sign a non-conflict of interest statement.

The overall CAQA activities are regulated by a set of internal documents that define various procedures with instructions: procedure for administrative support to the evaluation processes (procedure 1), for financial operations (procedure 2), for introducing a purpose-designed IT system (procedure 3) presented in [Rules of CAQA's work](#) (Annex 3). CAQA has also developed methods for improving the quality of its work by implementing the software that monitors the entire process of accreditation. This method has been fully implemented since July 2010 and has been significantly improved by CAQA staff in 2016 increasing the efficacy of administration and contributed to CAQA's independence.

At the beginning of its mandate, in June 2006, and in accordance with the task assigned by the [LoHE](#) Article 14, CAQA made a decision to prepare a draft of standards and procedures for accreditation that should be adopted by the National Council. This draft was made on the basis of the European Standards and Guidelines and Dublin Descriptors.

In October 2006, after public discussion on the document drafted by the CAQA, the NCHE adopted 6 sets of standards and in 2013 standards for initial accreditation were adopted. Since 2006 standards and procedures were amended several times. At present CAQA implements the following groups of standards by defined Rules and regulations on its procedures:

1. [Standards for accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5);
2. [Standards for accreditation of study programmes of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level](#) (Annex 6);
3. [Standards for accreditation of study programmes of doctoral studies](#) (Annex 7);
4. [Standards for initial accreditation](#) (Annex 8);
5. [Standards for self-evaluation](#) (Annex 9);
6. [Standards for audit with follow-up](#) (Annex 10).

All standards with rules and regulations are published on CAQA's website ([www.kapk.org](http://www.kapk.org)), and in the book: Accreditation and external quality control in Higher Education [in Serbian](#).

According to the [LoHE](#) (Articles 13, 14) and Rules and regulations for both accreditation and external quality control, CAQA members have dual responsibilities in the evaluation process: as members of a decision-making body as well as members of expert teams/panels for site visits and report preparation. Reviewers are not publicly available according to [LoHE](#), Article 14.

#### 4.4. Financing of the agency

Financing of the CAQA is regulated by the LoHE and Budget Law of the Republic of Serbia, which is adopted for each fiscal year. According to the [LoHE](#) Article 13, the Commission's work is funded by the [Accreditation fees](#) that are paid by the HEIs which are in the process of accreditation, from a separate treasury budget line managed by the MoES for this purpose. The [LoHE](#) Article 13 strictly states that these resources cannot be used for any other purpose except for financing the work of CAQA in the accreditation process.

These resources are managed according to Articles 35-43 of the [Rules of CAQA work](#), section on CAQA financing (Annex 3). According to the statements in Articles 37-40 of this document, payments from the CAQA budget line can be made only with the approval and signature of the president of CAQA which provides CAQA with independence in the financial management of its resources. The CAQA has operational autonomy of its budget.

In the process of accreditation of each HEI and study programme it is necessary to engage two reviewers, which, having in mind the total number of institutions and programmes, is a significant expense within the CAQA's budget. The level of reviewer's fee is defined by the NCHE and ranges from 20,000 to 30,000 RSD.



Another major expense is the salary for 17 members of the CAQA and seven members of CAQA office (one is paid by Ministry), as well as travel expenses for mandatory site visits plus international and domestic conferences. CAQA also has some material costs, costs for numerous services (such as software services ...), membership fees for various international organizations for quality assurance in higher education and acquisition of essential equipment such as computers, printers, faxes, etc. CAQA purchases the equipment in the process of public procurement in accordance with the relevant Serbian laws.

Financial management is regulated by CAQA rules and regulations as well as by a document that defines financial procedures (Annex 3). Money during the year is managed by order of the president of CAQA in accordance with the previously-adopted plan and defined procedures. Administrative work for financial transactions to and from the CAQA's budget line is conducted by MoES staff. [Review of CAQA's finances](#) in the period 2012-2016 is given in Annex 4. So far, CAQA's financial balance has been positive each year.

#### 4.5. Internal organization of the agency including procedures for appointment and composition of the board/council

##### 4.5.1. CAQA members

CAQA members represent the decision-making body corresponding to the board or council in many agencies. According to the [LoHE](#) Article 13, CAQA has 17 [members](#), three members from each of the 5 educational-scientific and/or educational-artistic fields – natural sciences and mathematics, humanities and social sciences, medical sciences, technical and technological sciences and arts and 2 members from the sector of professional studies. The mandate of the Commission members is four years. A member of the Commission cannot be a person elected or appointed to a government body, a body of territorial autonomy or local governance, the NCHE, a body of a political party or be the executive officer (dean, rector, director) of a higher education institution. The same person may be eligible for re-election only once. According to the LoHE, the Commission elects a president and vice-president from among its members.

CAQA members are elected by the NCHE with a mandate of 4 years with the possibility of a second mandate, among renowned university professors, experts in QA and HE reform, from both state and private HEIs, at the recommendation of CONUS and COHS. CONUS and COHS make a public call for the submission of candidacies for CAQA membership.

Candidates submit their applications within 15 days from the date of the announcement of the public call. A list of nominated candidates is made available to the public within a period of eight days from the deadline for the submission of candidacies. Comments and suggestions relating to the candidates proposed may be forwarded within thirty days from the date of making public the list of proposed candidates. Upon considering the comments and suggestions, CONUS and COHS make a final proposal containing a maximum of five candidates from each educational-scientific and educational-artistic field defined by the LoHE from various areas and submits it to the NCHE within 15 days from the date of the expiry of the period of thirty days mentioned above. The NCHE elects members of the CAQA within thirty days from the date of receipt of the proposal.

The NCHE is entitled to deselect a CAQA member before the end of his/her term in three cases. The first two reasons are: if a member requests to be deselected and also in the event of being elected into one of the executive positions mentioned above. The third reason, for which a member could be deselected is linked directly to the substance of the work performed by the member: if he or she fails to perform the duties in the Commission conscientiously or if he or she is damaging the reputation of the Commission and its duties. A crucial difference between the third reason and the first two is that the NCHE cannot deselect a member without argumentation made in writing by CONUS and COHS. Deselection has never happened so far.

Members of CAQA are experts not only in their scientific/artistic fields, but also in various aspects of QA as experience in QA is one of the criteria for electing them. However, overall CAQA expertise in evaluation has been built up during the period of the first Commission (2006-2010) especially through their participation in various international/European seminars and workshops on aspects of QA procedures, due to their role in developing standards, rules, regulations, protocols and guidelines for various evaluations and, finally due to their experience in executing evaluations described in chapters 5 and 6. The present CAQA members were elected in 2015 and 4 of them happen to be old members who spent a lot of time in briefing the new members for different evaluation activities. These briefings are always based on direct communication, discussions and e-mail and telephone contacts.

CAQA members are also trainers for reviewers. Since 2007, CAQA has organized 20 seminars for training reviewers for evaluation of accreditation documentation in all big university centres. In 2010 and 2011, CAQA organized 2 seminars for training students for accreditation and external quality control. These were 2-day seminars with theoretical background in the QA system, CAQA mandate, case studies and on some practical examples of evaluations being given in the form of workshops. Participants were given printed material with presentations and other relevant documents and literature. Considerable briefing and discussion between members of CAQA and students takes place during the preparation of site visits as well as after the site visit during preparation of the report. At the beginning of the first round of external quality control (audit) in 2011, CAQA held one seminar for reviewers on procedures and methodology for external quality control of HEIs. During 2016, CAQA held three seminars for preparing polytechnics for the third round of accreditation.

CAQA members are in charge of writing all evaluation decisions and reports, based upon reviewers reports, reports on the site visit and personal insight into the documentation submitted by the HEI.

CAQA has regular meetings every 2 weeks, and sometimes weekly. On the Agenda are always reports on various types of evaluations for which decisions are made after reporting of the relevant sub-commission members. Other issues may also be Agenda items, such as organizational problems, a report on events between 2 sessions, reports from meetings and activities of CAQA members in Tempus projects, a report on ENQA events or on activities regarding ENQA membership, etc. Between regular CAQA meetings, CAQA members work separately on preparing various reports, doing site-visits, attending meetings, preparing publications, giving trainings, etc. Members of the sub-commissions meet at the CAQA office to prepare for site-visits, during the site visit and for preparation of draft reports. CAQA members spend on CAQA activities an average of 2 days/week.

Although students are included in teams for site-visits, CAQA is considering the idea of including them in the decision-making body, though this would need changes in the legislature.

#### 4.5.2. Administrative office

CAQA has administrative support from [CAQA's administrative office](#). CAQA uses offices and administrative support of the MoES, but also hires additional staff paid by CAQA. Out of 8 administrative staff the MoES has assigned 1 officer (lawyer) to CAQA who are employed and paid by the MoES while the remaining 7 officers are appointed and paid from CAQA budget line. The appointment procedure includes a public call, interviews and a joint decision by CAQA members. Appointed officers have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement. They have responsibilities for a particular set of evaluation activities:

- 4 administrative officers belonging to different fields (natural sciences and mathematics, social sciences and humanities, medical sciences, technical and technological sciences and arts) administer applications within their field and communicate with relevant reviewers and members of the sub-commission
- one officer providing administrative and technical support for reports
- one financial officer takes care of CAQA finances and communicates with MoES
- secretary who is in charge of taking minutes at CAQA meetings and maintains the data base and web site
- one lawyer who takes care of the legal issues, communicates with MoES and has a managerial role for the whole office

The organisational structure is presented in Table 1:

Table 1. CAQA organisational structure

Type of staff	Function					External support
CAQA members	President and vice-president (selected from the 17 CAQA members)					Pool of national and international experts for every subject area
	Subcommission for Natural Sciences and Mathematics <b>3 members</b>	Subcommission for Humanities and Social Sciences <b>3 members</b>	Subcommission for Medical Sciences <b>3 members</b>	Subcommission for Technical and Technological Sciences <b>3 members</b>	Subcommission for the Arts <b>3 members</b>	
	<b>2 members</b> from the sector of professional studies					
Administrative staff	1 administrative officer	1 administrative officers	1/2 administrative officer	1 administrative officer	1/2 administrative officer	
	financial officer, CAQA secretary, assistant officer for preparing reports					
	CAQA office manager/lawyer					

#### 4.6. Responsibilities of the agency other than the evaluation of higher education

CAQA has an educational role – it organizes and runs trainings on various aspects of quality assurance: for staff at universities and higher schools on QA standards implementation and preparation of documents for accreditation, for reviewers on evaluation procedures, for students and representatives of the labour market on how to integrate into the QA system and help improve HE in Serbia. CAQA members are integrated into the European QA system in HE in different ways: by participating in ENQA and other events related to QA, by being part of the ENQA pool of agency reviewers, by organizing QA workshops and, thus, contributing to the integration of the national HE system into the EHEA. CAQA also has international activities that will be explained in [chapter 8](#).

### **5. Higher education quality assurance activities of the agency**

#### 5.1. Description of the methodological scope of the agency

CAQA undertakes 4 types of external quality assurance methods:

- Accreditation of study programmes
- Accreditation of HEIs
- External quality control of HEIs – AUDIT
- Initial accreditation of HEIs and study programmes

The complex external evaluation process, run by CAQA, together with the measures of internal QA to enable its success is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Review of CAQA external evaluation processes.

External evaluation done by CAQA	Published documents on evaluation criteria and procedures	Evaluation process	Resources	CAQA internal QA measures enabling a successful evaluation process
<b>ACCREDITATION OF STUDY PROGRAMMES</b>  (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules and regulations on accreditation standards and procedures for HEIs and their study programmes</li> <li>- Standards for accreditation of study programmes of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level</li> <li>- Standards for accreditation of doctoral studies</li> <li>- Standards for accreditation of doctoral studies in arts</li> <li>- Guidelines for preparing documentation for accreditation of study programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HEI submits documentation for accreditation of study programme</li> <li>- Assessment by 2 external reviewers (univ. profs)</li> <li>- CAQA members prepare draft report</li> <li>- CAQA brings and publishes a decision</li> <li>- Follow up activity in the case of conditional decision</li> <li>- Appeal procedure in the case of negative decision</li> <li>- Certificate of accreditation</li> <li>- Licence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pool of trained reviewers</li> <li>- CAQA members</li> <li>- CAQA admin. staff</li> <li>- Office premises and infrastructure</li> <li>- Database software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Measures for preventing conflict of interest</li> <li>- Professionalism of CAQA members and staff</li> <li>- Independent decision-making</li> <li>- Training reviewers</li> <li>- Briefing HEIs</li> <li>- Measures for improvement based upon: surveys (external and internal), system-wide analysis, SWOT analysis</li> </ul>
<b>ACCREDITATION OF HEIs</b>  (5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules and regulations of accreditation standards for HEIs and their study programmes</li> <li>- Standards for accreditation of HEIs</li> <li>- Rules and regulations for self-evaluation and quality assessment of HEIs</li> <li>-Standards for self-evaluation of HEIs</li> <li>- Guidelines for preparing documentation for accreditation of HEIs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HEI submits documentation for accreditation of HEI</li> <li>- Assessment by 2 external reviewers (univ. profs)</li> <li>- CAQA forms sub-commission including students</li> <li>- Sub-commission goes on site-visit</li> <li>- Sub-commission prepares draft report</li> <li>- CAQA brings and publishes decision</li> <li>- Follow up activity in the case of conditional decision</li> <li>- Appeal procedure in the case of negative decision</li> <li>- Certificate of accreditation</li> <li>- Licence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pool of trained reviewers (univ. profs and students)</li> <li>- CAQA members</li> <li>- CAQA admin. staff</li> <li>- Office premises and infrastructure</li> <li>- Database software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Measures for preventing conflict of interest</li> <li>- Professionalism of CAQA members and staff</li> <li>- Independent decision-making</li> <li>- Training reviewers</li> <li>- Briefing HEIs</li> <li>- Measures for improvement based upon: surveys (external and internal), system-wide analysis, SWOT analysis</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>EXTERNAL QUALITY CONTROL OF HEIs (AUDIT)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(5-8 years)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules and regulations of standards for external quality control of HEIs</li> <li>- Standards for external quality control of HEIs</li> <li>- Rules and regulations for self-evaluation and quality assessment of HEIs</li> <li>-Standards for self-evaluation of HEIs</li> <li>- Guidelines for preparing documentation for external quality control of HEIs</li> <li>- Guidelines for preparing self-evaluation report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HEI submits self-evaluation report and accompanying documents</li> <li>- Assessment by 2 external reviewers (univ. prof.)</li> <li>- CAQA forms sub-commission including students</li> <li>- Sub-commission goes on site-visit</li> <li>- Sub-commission prepares draft report</li> <li>- CAQA accepts report</li> <li>- CAQA publishes report</li> <li>- Follow up procedure in the case of some shortcomings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pool of trained reviewers (univ. profs and students)</li> <li>- CAQA members</li> <li>- CAQA admin. staff</li> <li>- Office infrastructure</li> <li>- Database software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Measures for preventing conflict of interest</li> <li>- Professionalism of CAQA members and staff</li> <li>- Independent decision-making</li> <li>- Training reviewers</li> <li>- Briefing HEIs</li> <li>- Measures for improvement based upon: surveys (external and internal), system-wide analysis, SWOT analysis</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>INITIAL ACCREDITATION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules and regulations of initial accreditation standards for HEIs and their study programmes</li> <li>- Standards for initial accreditation of HEIs</li> <li>- Standards for accreditation of study programmes</li> <li>- Guidelines for preparing documentation for initial accreditation of HEIs</li> <li>- Guidelines for preparing documentation for accreditation of study programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-HEI submits the request to the Ministry</li> <li>- CAQA gives the opinion to the Ministry on the fulfilment of standards in a 2-step procedure</li> <li>- Ministry gives the work permit</li> <li>- After one year HEI submits the request for accreditation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pool of trained reviewers (univ. profs and students)</li> <li>- CAQA members</li> <li>- CAQA admin. staff</li> <li>- Office premises and infrastructure</li> <li>- Database software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Measures for preventing conflict of interest</li> <li>- Professionalism of CAQA members and staff</li> <li>- Independent decision-making</li> <li>- Training reviewers</li> <li>- Briefing HEIs</li> <li>- Measures for improvement based upon: surveys (external and internal), system-wide analysis, SWOT analysis</li> </ul>

### 5.1.1. Accreditation

Accreditation is a periodic activity of CAQA in which CAQA decides *if threshold criteria are met for the accreditation of either institution or study programme*. The process results in issuing:

- ***Decision on accreditation with Certificate*** for the higher education institution or study programme that is necessary for obtaining an operating licence.
- ***Act of warning*** to the higher education institution, pointing out the shortcomings with respect to compliance with the standards, in which case CAQA provides an adequate period of time to the institution to remove these shortcomings, and after expiry of the deadline makes a final decision upon the application. This warning gives an opportunity to the HE institution to improve the quality. Deadlines for the response to an Act of warning are between 1 week to 6 months, depending on the type and number of shortcomings.
- ***Decision on Rejection*** of the application for accreditation. If CAQA rejects the application for accreditation, the higher education institution may appeal to the NCHE within 30 days from the date of receiving the decision.

### 5.1.2. External Quality Control of the HEIs - Audit

External quality control is also a periodic activity of CAQA. This represents a set of auditing activities based upon a self-evaluation report of the HEI, resulting with the audit report completed by CAQA. In the case of any problems, an institution will not lose its accreditation. Instead, the institution is submitted to the **follow-up procedure**: it has to prepare the action plan, report on the completion of the action plan and then CAQA decides if the standards have been met. Final audit report is then published. *The focus in this evaluation process is to enhance the quality system of HEIs.*

### 5.1.3. Initial accreditation

Request for initial accreditation is submitted to the Ministry and then documentation is given to CAQA for evaluating the fulfilment of standards for initial accreditation. CAQA gives the opinion on the fulfilment of standards in the two step process. First, CAQA makes evaluation of 3 minimum (threshold) standards regarding teachers, premises and finances. If any of these standards are not fulfilled negative opinion is given to the Ministry. If an institution in foundation fulfils the minimum standards, documentation is given to reviewers and a site-visit is organised. A decision is made at a CAQA meeting and in the case of CAQA's positive opinion, Ministry gives the work permit to the institution which lasts one year. After a year the HEI has to submit to CAQA documentation for accreditation.

5.2. Reference(s) for evaluation (predefined criteria, legal documents, subject benchmarks, professional standards, the stated goals of the evaluated institution)

Legal frameworks of the evaluation processes in Serbia are given by the [LoHE](#) Articles 13-17. By this set of Articles CAQA is nominated as an evaluation body for both accreditation and external quality control. Accreditation cycles are regulated by the [LoHE](#) (Article 16) where it states that accreditation has to be done every 5 years. The cycles for self-evaluation of HEIs held on 3 years are also regulated by the [LoHE](#) (Article 17). External quality control is also a periodic activity of CAQA regulated by the [LoHE](#) (Article 15). External evaluation processes can be initiated by CAQA according to the annual activity plan, by special order of the NCHE, on the request of an HEI, or by order of the minister.

The evaluation process is regulated by a number of rules, regulations and several sets of standards for every type of evaluation (Annexes 5-10), including guidelines for their implementation by the HEI and instructions for reviewers, all published in the book “Accreditation and external quality control in higher education” and on the web site.

Since the last CAQA review there were changes of the LoHE followed by changes of standards. Major relevant changes of the [LoHE](#) done in 2015 are:

1. in article 13 - 2 more members to CAQA were added from the area of professional studies and it was specified that CAQA is financed from the special budget line,
2. in article 14 - international experts were introduced in reviewing doctoral study programmes,
3. in article 25 - new type of study programme - professional master was introduced
4. in article 30 - principle of transparency in doctoral study programmes is introduced by committing HEIs to publicise doctoral dissertations on their web sites 30 days before public defence and also to create digital repository of all doctoral dissertations.

Corresponding changes of standards were made in 2015 in standards for accreditation of doctoral studies and in 2016 in standards for study programmes of the first and second level introducing professional master study programmes.

In 2016 CAQA made a revision of all standards, they were adopted by NCHE in April 2017 after the public debate, but still waiting for publishing in Official Gazette.

Within each accreditation standard there are several criteria that should be assessed. For example in the evaluation of the teaching process in a particular HEI, the evaluator should examine: objectives of the study programme and its harmonization with learning outcomes; teaching and learning methods, factors enabling achievement of learning outcomes; the system of grading based on the measurement of learning outcomes; adjustment of ECTS workload to learning activities required for the achievement of the expected learning outcomes; procedures of monitoring of quality of the study programme; feedback information from the employers about the graduates and their competences; competences of the teachers and associates; quality of teaching facilities and learning environment; quality and amount of the textbooks, scripts, material in electronic format etc. Standard descriptions are published on the web-site and in the book “Accreditation and external quality control in higher education”.



### 5.3. Overall planning of an evaluation

The first round of accreditation of both institutions and study programmes in Serbian HE was performed during the period 2007-2011. Accreditation was performed according to the following plan:

- All colleges of professional studies were evaluated in 2007
- Evaluation of universities, faculties and colleges of academic studies was divided into 5 cycles: first and second cycle in 2008, third, fourth and fifth in 2009
- Additional evaluation of HEIs and study programmes was performed in the sixth and seventh cycle in 2010, and eighth in 2011

According to this plan all HEIs had to submit the necessary documentation by a certain [deadline](#) defined by CAQA and published on the web-site.

The first round of external quality control of the HEIs started in May 2011. The first institutions subjected to this were all polytechnics accredited in 2007. All HEIs accredited in 2008 and 2009 submitted a self-evaluation report by the end of May 2012 and 2013, respectively.

The second round of accreditation of both institutions and study programmes in Serbian HE has been performed during the period 2012-2016 according to the plan for the first round.

- All colleges of professional studies were evaluated in 2012
- Evaluation of universities, faculties and colleges of academic studies was divided into 5 cycles: first and second cycle in 2013, third, fourth and fifth in 2014
- Additional evaluation of HEIs and study programmes was performed in the sixth and seventh cycle in 2015, and eighth in 2016

The third round of accreditation started in 2017 for all colleges of professional studies.

### 5.4. Procedures for briefing and communication with the evaluated institutions

CAQA has developed several procedures for communication with evaluated institutions such as providing information, giving seminars for HEIs, direct communication with HEI representatives at the CAQA office to give assistance.

The most important information platform of CAQA is the internet site [www.kapk.org](http://www.kapk.org). The procedure for every evaluation process (accreditation of study programmes of the first and second level, accreditation of doctoral study programmes, accreditation of HEIs, external quality control of HEIs) is given on the web-site and in the book "Accreditation and external quality control in higher education". Available information relevant for communication with institutions related to the evaluation procedures includes: instructions for application for every type of evaluation process, a list of the necessary documentation for applications, CAQA standards, rules and regulations, forms for accreditation requests, etc. CAQA also provides information by telephone and e-mail. This service is provided by its administrative staff.

Seminars were held for all HEIs entering a particular cycle during the first accreditation round with *ca.* 900 participants from all HEIs in Serbia, dedicated to the preparation of accreditation documentation. In 2010, all HEIs were invited to seminars on preparing a self-evaluation report. At the beginning of the second accreditation round in November 2011, a 2-day seminar was held for colleges accredited in 2007. At the beginning of the third accreditation round in 2016, CAQA held three seminars for preparing colleges for professional studies for accreditation.

#### 5.5. Role of the external experts

According to the [LoHE](#) (Article 14) and Rules and regulations on accreditation and external quality control (Annexes 5 and 10), there are 3 groups of external experts: reviewers from the teaching community (national and international) students, and representatives of employers.

Reviewers from the teaching community are elected by CAQA according to articles 31 and 32 of the [Rules of CAQA's work](#), (Annex 3) after responding to an open call by submitting a [Reviewer application form](#) (Annex 3) and analysis of their competences by sub-commission in the relevant field. If discussion at CAQA meeting results in their acceptance they are put on the [List of reviewers](#). Reviewers have been trained by CAQA members and thus a pool of around 700 trained national reviewers has been created. There is a group a group of 17 international reviewers who are occasionally used for accreditation of doctoral study programmes. All of them are also obliged to sign a statement to prevent conflicts of interest.

For each particular evaluation CAQA nominates 2 reviewers from the area of the evaluation entity (study programme or HEI). In the first round of accreditations, no international experts were involved for a number of reasons: organizational, time scheduling, etc. This was partially corrected in the second round of accreditation. In the case of institutional evaluation when the evaluation process requires site-visits, participation of students and labour market representatives is compulsory. They are delegated by SCONUS/SCOHS and the Serbian Chamber of Commerce.

The role of the reviewers from the teaching community can be briefly described as follows: each reviewer analyzes only the documentation as, according to the [LoHE](#) (Article 14), they are anonymous. Consequently, they do not do site visits. Reviewers have instructions for every type of assessments and then make their report on a form specific to the type of evaluation. In general, the reviewer reports the extent to which the accreditation standards were met by both elaborating and grading from 5 to 10 in the case of accreditation and by elaborating the fulfilment of standards for external quality control. At the end of the report they should make a list of good and bad points in the programme or HEI.

The reports of the external reviewers can be heterogeneous – ranging from accurate, focused and well founded to benevolent which do not provide a consistent, clear and sufficient source of information to the sub-commission or CAQA members. In that case, sub-commission members make a supra-revision or nominate extra reviewers, if necessary.

### 5.6. Agency strategy for student participation

Enrolment of students in CAQA's teams in the accreditation process is not directly stated in the LoHE and their participation was limited only to the preparation of self-evaluation reports of HEIs. To improve the mechanisms for quality control and in accordance with ESG standards and European good practice, CAQA initiated a change of regulations and procedures for accreditation and external evaluation of HEIs in 2010, so that they now include students as partners in the evaluation process. Students are selected from the list of students nominated by the Student Conferences (SCONUS and SCOHS) and become members of CAQA's sub-commissions on site visits.

CAQA held 2 seminars in October 2010 and May 2011 to train students for the accreditation process and external quality assessment. As a result, a pool of 50 trained students was made for the accreditation process and external evaluation. Since then, students have been involved in 55 site visits during the process of external evaluation of higher schools and contributed to the reports.

CAQA is currently discussing changing the legal status regarding student involvement in external evaluation processes by including them as members in the study programme evaluation as well as members of the decision-making body.

## 6. Processes and their methodologies

Before submitting a request for external evaluation, HEIs have an opportunity to get advice, recommendations and instructions during the process of preparing the documentation for accreditation either during short briefing sessions or at seminars organized by CAQA, as described in [section 5.4](#). Each external evaluation process has a number of steps defined according to the Rules on standards and procedures for accreditation or external quality control, including the relevant standards.

In the process of accreditation of HEIs and external quality control of HEIs it is necessary that HEIs prepare a self-evaluation report according to a separate set of standards (Annex 9). CAQA has created and published guidelines for HEIs on how to prepare the self-evaluation report. [Guidelines for the preparation of self-evaluation reports](#) have the following parts: Legal background of the evaluation process in which the procedure is described; List of self-evaluation standards; Instructions for SWOT analysis; Description of every standard with the instructions on how it should be presented (implemented); List of indicators and documents that support the fulfilment of every standard.

### 6.1. Accreditation of study programmes

The accreditation process has the following steps according to the procedure defined by Rules on standards and procedures for accreditation study programmes, including [Standards for accreditation of study programmes of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level](#) (Annex 6), and [Standards for accreditation of doctoral programs](#) including doctoral studies in arts (Annex 7).

#### STEP 1 Accreditation request

Submission of the [Request](#) by an HEI has to be on a particular form and has to follow the Guidelines for preparation of documentation for accreditation of [study programmes of the first and second level](#), [doctoral studies](#) and [interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary \(IMT\), distance and joint programmes](#). Within the documentation, HEI has to present some of its characteristics (number of ECTS and contact hours of every course, number and workload of teaching staff, size of teaching premises etc.) by using an [E-form](#) for the acquisition of quantitative data on the study programme. Upon acceptance of the accreditation request, administrative officers classify the material and forward it to a particular sub-commission depending on the scientific field marked in the application.

#### STEP 2 Sub-commission formation

A sub-commission consists of three CAQA members from a particular scientific/artistic field. Members of the sub-commission are not from the HEI that is the subject of the evaluation. The sub-commission, according to the [LoHE](#) Article 14, suggests and CAQA elects 2 reviewers from the pool of trained reviewers, ensuring that they are not from the HEI being evaluated, who have 2 months to complete their reviews. In the case of accreditation of the study programme of doctoral studies CAQA usually elects international reviewers. CAQA takes care about protecting their anonymity. Information on reviewers was given in [section 5.5](#).

Administrative officers communicate with reviewers, prepare contracts and send them the documentation submitted by HEIs.

### STEP 3 Reviewers' reports

The reviewers' task is to examine requests for accreditation according to the [Instructions for reviewers of study programmes of the 1st and 2nd level](#) and for [doctoral studies](#), as described in [section 5.5](#). In the case of accreditation of a study programme for distance learning, CAQA appoints a third reviewer to evaluate the aspects of distance learning. In the [Report for study programmes of the 1st and 2nd level](#) and [Report for doctoral studies](#), presented on the relevant form, they make their evaluation by both elaborating and grading the level of fulfilment of every standard. Each reviewer submits his/her own report.

Administrative officers are in charge of receiving reviewer's reports. All relevant documentation and reports are then given to the sub-commission for further processing.

### STEP 4 Sub-commission report

After analysing reviewers' reports and gaining an insight into the documentation, the sub-commission prepares a report for a CAQA meeting. This consists of the review on marks and comments given by reviewers for every standard, description of the fulfilment of every standard and recommendation for the accreditation decision. This document takes typically around 6 pages. Its structure follows the standards of accreditation of study programmes.

### STEP 5 Decision making process and outcomes

Members of the sub-commission present the report at a CAQA meeting and it undergoes analysis and discussion, especially if reviewers' evaluations differ. Very often documentation is then presented and analysed at the meeting. After that, CAQA members either accept or change the decision recommended by the sub-commission. CAQA members from the institution under evaluation are not present at the time of decision-making, which is done by voting. The decision for all 3 types of outcomes (accreditation, act of warning and rejection) contains a description of the fulfilment of every accreditation standard with special emphasis on the curriculum and teachers' competences.

In the case of a positive outcome, when a study programme completely fulfils the requirements for all standards, CAQA issues a [Decision on accreditation](#) with a detailed description of the fulfilment of every accreditation standard and attached *Certificate of accreditation*. In the case of partial fulfilment of the accreditation standards an HEI gets an [Act of warning](#) which contains the decision with a detailed description of the extent of fulfilment of every accreditation standard with precise instructions for overcoming the shortcomings. When a study programme does not adequately fulfil requirements of the accreditation standards an HEI gets a [Decision on rejection](#) with a detailed description of the extent of fulfilment of every accreditation standard.

In the case of a conditional decision (act of warning), the HEI under evaluation has an opportunity to comment on and to question the decision. Comments have to be given in a written form to CAQA. If necessary, before that, an opportunity is provided for HEI representatives to directly communicate with the CAQA sub-commission members for additional clarification. At every meeting minutes are taken. After clarification HEI has up to 6 months to remove shortcomings and to submit corrected documentation. This improved documentation is discussed on CAQA meeting and a final decision is made. Therefore, act of warning could be considered as a sort of follow-up instrument for helping the HEI to improve the quality of the study programme.

#### STEP 6 Appeal procedure

The appeal procedure may take place in the case of a decision on rejection on a request for accrediting a study programme. In the case of rejection, an HEI can make an appeal to the NCHE within a maximum of 30 days after receiving the decision, according to the [LoHE](#) Article 16. Details of the [Appeal procedure](#) are on the NCHE website. In the appeal document, an HEI has an opportunity to express opinions about the evaluation outcome.

### 6.2. Accreditation of HEIs

The accreditation process has the following steps according to the procedure defined by [Rules on standards and procedures for accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5).

#### STEP 1 Accreditation request

Submission of the [Request](#) by an HEI has to be on a particular form and has to follow the [Guidelines for preparation of documentation for accreditation of HEIs](#). Within the documentation (standard 12), an HEI has to present a self-evaluation report according to the [Guidelines for preparing a self-evaluation report](#) as well as presenting HEI characteristics by using an [E-form](#) for quantitative data on the HEI, as also required for accreditation of study programmes.

Upon acceptance of the accreditation request, administrative officers classify the material and forward it to particular sub-commissions depending on the scientific/artistic fields.

#### STEP 2 Sub-commission formation

A sub-commission of three CAQA members is formed using the criteria and procedures identical to those described in STEP 2 for accreditation of study programmes. It consists of 3 CAQA members from the relevant artistic/scientific fields. Members of the sub-commission are not from the HEI that is the subject of evaluation. The sub-commission, according to the [LoHE](#) Article 14, suggests and CAQA elects reviewers for an HEI evaluation (2 for faculty and 3 in case of university). CAQA takes care to maintain their anonymity. Administrative officers communicate with reviewers, prepare contracts, send them the documentation submitted by HEIs.

### STEP 3 Reviewers' reports

The reviewers' task is to examine requests for accreditation of HEIs according to the [Instructions for reviewers](#). Each reviewer analyzes the documentation accompanying the self-evaluation report submitted by the HEI and assesses the fulfilment of the standards, to identify which standards are fulfilled completely, which partially, and those that have not been fulfilled; which areas of work of an HEI satisfy the quality indicators, which areas are partially satisfied, as well as those which are unsatisfactory. As explained in [section 5.5](#), every standard is evaluated independently by each reviewer by both elaborating and grading, in the [Reviewer's report](#).

Administrative officers are in charge of receiving reviewers' reports. All relevant documentation and reports are then given to the sub-commission for further processing.

### STEP 4 Site visit

After receiving reviewers' reports CAQA forms a team of experts for the site visit consisting of at least two CAQA members and one student delegated by SCONUS (in the case of a faculty/academy of arts/university/higher school of academic studies) or SCOHS (in the case of a higher school of professional studies) and a labour market representative delegated by Chamber of Commerce. In the process of planning the site-visit, CAQA communicates with the particular HEI. A site visit follows a predefined [Site visit protocol](#). During a site visit the sub-commission interviews the representatives of different groups in the HEI: management, teaching staff (coordinators of the study programmes), non-teaching staff, students and the HEI's team for self-evaluation and has a tour of the institution to see the space and facilities for teaching, research, administration, library, student services, student activities (clubs), etc. A site visit lasts approximately 6-8 hours.

In the case of universities which have several faculties with status of legal entity CAQA visit every faculty separately. In the first round of accreditation all institutions were accredited at the same time as their study programmes, and thus there was no need for separate site visits regarding study programmes. Members of the site visit team create the [Site-visit report](#).

### STEP 5 Sub-commission report

After analysing reviewer's and site-visit reports and having an insight into the documentation as well as into the situation on the spot during the site visit, the sub-commission prepares a report for a CAQA meeting. This report consists of the review on grades and comments given by reviewers for every standard (as described in step 4 for accreditation of study programmes), site visit report and recommendation for the accreditation decision. The evaluation report for the purpose of accreditation of an HEI is a part of the Decision on accreditation/rejection/Act of warning. Its structure follows the standards of accreditation of HEIs. Its length is 6 pages on average. However, each HEI's study programmes are separately evaluated by two reviewers (as described in step 2 of accreditation of study programmes) and the Decision on accreditation/rejection/Act of warning of study programmes (written by members of the sub-commission) is on average 6 pages long. Therefore, the total length of decisions for accreditation of an HEI with 10 programmes would be typically 66 pages.



## STEP 6 Decision-making process and outcomes

Members of the sub-commission present the report at a CAQA meeting and it undergoes analysis and discussion, especially if reviewers' evaluations differ. Very often the documentation submitted by HEI is also presented and analysed at the meeting. After that CAQA members either accept or change the decision recommended by the sub-commission. CAQA members from the institution under evaluation are not present at the moment of decision-making, made by voting.

In the case of a positive outcome, when a HEI completely fulfils the requirements for all standards, CAQA issues a [Decision on accreditation](#) with a detailed description of the fulfilment of every accreditation standard and attached *Certificate of accreditation*.

In the case of partial fulfilment of the accreditation standards a HEI gets an [Act of warning](#) which contains the decision with a detailed description of the extent of fulfilment of every accreditation standard with precise instructions for overcoming shortcomings. When a HEI does not adequately fulfil requirements of the accreditation standards it gets a [Decision on rejection](#) with a detailed description of the extent of fulfilment of every accreditation standard.

In the case of Act of warning, the HEI has an opportunity to comment on and to question the decision. Comments have to be given in a written form to CAQA. If necessary, before that, an opportunity is provided for HEI representatives to directly communicate with the CAQA sub-commission members for additional clarifications. At every meeting minutes are taken. After clarifications HEI has up to 6 months to remove shortcomings and to submit corrected documentation.

This improved documentation is discussed on CAQA meeting and a final decision is made. Therefore, as in the case of study programme evaluation, act of warning could be considered as a sort of follow-up instrument for helping the HEI to improve its quality.

## STEP 7 Appeal procedure

The appeal procedure may take place in the case of a negative CAQA decision on the request for accreditation of a HEI. In the case of rejection, a HEI can appeal to the NCHE within a maximum of 30 days after receiving the decision, according to the [LoHE](#) Article 16. Details of the [Appeal procedure](#) are on the NCHE website. In the appeal document, a HEI has an opportunity to express opinions about evaluation outcomes.

### 6.3. External quality control of HEIs - Audit

In the process of external quality control, evaluators compare the overall achievements of a HEI with the results shown in the previous period. In this evaluation process, many indicators are used within every standard. For example, indicators to evaluate a study programme are: student drop-out rate, percentage of graduated students related to the number of admitted students, average duration of studies, opinion of graduates about the quality of the study programme and achieved learning outcomes, satisfaction of employers with the qualifications of graduates, achievements of the graduates in later professional development etc.



The process of external quality control of HEIs has the following steps according to the procedure defined by Rules on standards and procedures for external quality control of HEIs, including [Standards for external quality control \(audit\) of HEIs](#) including follow-up procedure (Annex 10), as well as Rules and regulations of standards for self-evaluation and quality assessment of HEIs, including [Standards for self-evaluation](#) (Annex 9).

#### STEP 1 Request for external quality control of HEIs

For external evaluation of an HEI, the institution has to prepare a self-evaluation report according to the [Guidelines for preparation of self-evaluation reports](#) as part of the application documentation required for external evaluation.

The report on self-evaluation should be structured to reflect the standards of self-evaluation and assessment of quality of HEIs (standards 1-14). It is necessary for the following aspects to be individually considered in the self-evaluation report:

- Description of the current situation;
- Analysis and assessment of the current situation in view of the previously-defined goals, demands, and expectations;
- Analysis of the weak and strong points of the HEI together with external factors that could either positively or negatively influence the activity of an organization (SWOT analysis)
- Suggestions for measures and activities to be undertaken for the purpose of quality improvement in the HEI.

#### STEP 2 Sub-commission formation

A sub-commission consists of 2 CAQA members from a particular scientific/artistic field. Members of the sub-commission are not from the HEI that is the subject of the evaluation. According to the [LoHE](#) Article 14, the sub-commission suggests and CAQA elects 2 reviewers from the pool of trained reviewers from the relevant scientific/artistic field ensuring that they are not from the HEI that is the subject of the evaluation, who have 2 months to complete the reviews. CAQA ensures that reviewers remain anonymous. Details on reviewers are in [section 5.5](#).

Administrative officers communicate with reviewers, prepare contracts, and send them the documentation submitted by HEIs.

#### STEP 3 Reviewers' reports

Each reviewer analyzes the documentation accompanying the report on self-evaluation submitted by the HEI and assesses the fulfilment of the standards, identifying those standards which are fulfilled completely or partially, and those that have not been fulfilled according to the [Instructions for reviewers](#). Reviewers also identify which areas of work of an HEI satisfy the quality indicators, which areas are partially satisfied, as well as those which are unsatisfactory. A reviewer submits his/her [Reviewer's report](#) to the Commission on the relevant form. In the case of external quality control, reviewers also state the following in their report: the way that HEI's QA strategy helps in positioning the HEI in its academic, social, and economic surroundings; whether the HEI submitted its action plan for realization of its QA strategy; whether the HEI has at its disposal the resources to support the long-term realization of its goals.

#### STEP 4 Site visit

After receiving reviewers' reports CAQA forms a team of experts for the site visit, consisting of at least 2 CAQA members and one student delegated by SCONUS (in the case of a faculty/academy of arts/university/higher school of academic studies) or SCOHS (in the case of a higher school of professional studies) and one representative of labour market delegated by Chamber of Commerce. In planning the site-visit, CAQA communicates with the particular HEI. Preparation of the site visit has several steps. The members of the external expert group (sub-commission including a student and labour market representative) get the reviewer reports and documentation about institution from the CAQA office, to prepare for a sub-commission meeting before the visit. At the sub-commission meeting, the members exchange views on the HEI based upon the documents presented and prepare additional questions for interviews. The site visit follows a defined [Protocol](#). During the site visit, the site visit team interviews representatives of different groups in the HEI: management, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, students. Then, team has a tour around the institution to see the space and facilities for teaching, research, administration, library, student services, student activities (clubs), etc. Site visits last approximately 6-8 hours. Every member of the evaluation team makes his/her own notes during the meetings that serve as the basis for creating his/her own report on the site visit which is then incorporated into a sub-commission [Report from the site visit](#). After a site visit, the sub-commission meets again to prepare the draft report.

#### STEP 5 Sub-commission report

The sub-commission's draft evaluation report for external quality control is structured in the same way as the self-evaluation report. It consists of a resume and assessment for each evaluation subject, as well as clearly-stated recommendations.

The report aims to establish the degree to which HEIs realize their mission regarding the delivery of education, as well as to provide an appropriate level of quality of study programmes offered to the students, enabling the students to achieve their individual educational goals. The questions that should be answered in the report are:

- what is the HEI doing and what does the HEI want to do (mission and vision of HEI)
- in what way is the HEI doing that (implementation programme of the HEI)
- in what way does the HEI confirm that it does what it should be doing (evaluation process of HEI)
- in what way does an HEI plan to change itself to improve its own work/function (strategic planning of HEI)

#### STEP 6 Decision-making process and outcomes

Members of the sub-commission present the report at a CAQA meeting and it undergoes analysis and discussion. After that, CAQA members either accept or change the draft report recommended by the sub-commission. Any CAQA members from the institution under evaluation are not present at the time of decision-making, taken by voting.

Reports on external evaluations have a specified format with the following chapters: Introduction, evaluation of the internal quality assurance system in a HEI; procedure of the external evaluation; study programme; teaching process; research/professional or artistic activities; mobility and international cooperation; teachers and associates; students; textbooks, literature, library and IT resources; management, administration, student services and finances; continual quality assessment and self-evaluation, conclusions and recommendations where suggestion is made on the measures and activities to be undertaken for the purpose of quality improvement of the HEI as a whole. A CAQA external quality control report of a HEI would typically be about 20 pages.

#### STEP 7 Follow-up procedure

In the case of the substantial problems in the quality, CAQA brings the follow-up report in which all shortcomings and recommendations are stated by following [Follow-up procedure](#) (Annex 9). The institution has 30 days to prepare an action plan after receiving the follow-up report. The action plan has to be approved by CAQA and after that the HEI undertakes all the activities needed to alleviate the shortcomings and submits a report on realization of the action plan within 6 months. If necessary an additional site-visit is organised and then CAQA decides if the standards have been met. The final report is then published.

#### 6.4. Initial accreditation

The process of initial accreditation is defined by Rules on [Standards and procedures for initial accreditation of HEIs and study programmes](#) (Annex 8).

#### STEP 1 Accreditation request

[The Request for initial accreditation](#) is submitted to the Ministry and then sent to CAQA for opinion on the fulfilment of standards. CAQA forms the sub-commission to run the 2-step process: a) evaluation of the fulfilment of the minimum standards regarding premises, teachers and finances and b) evaluation of all other standards in case the minimum standards are fulfilled.

Upon acceptance of the initial accreditation request, administrative officers classify the material and forward it to particular sub-commissions depending on the scientific/artistic fields.

#### STEP 2 Sub-commission formation and activities in the first step of the evaluation process

A sub-commission consists of 2 CAQA members from a particular scientific/artistic field. They go through the documentation to check if the institution in foundation fulfils the minimum standards regarding teachers, premises and finances.

### STEP 3 Sub-commission report in the first step

If any of these minimum standards are not fulfilled sub-commission prepares a report for a *negative opinion* for the Ministry which has to be accepted at a CAQA meeting. This report consists of a review for every minimum standard with the description of their fulfilment. The evaluation report in this case is part of the negative opinion on initial accreditation which is sent to the Ministry.

### STEP 4 Sub-commission activities in the second step of the evaluation process

In the case of fulfilment of the minimum standards, sub-commission gives the short oral report at a CAQA meeting that the HEI fulfils the minimum standards and that reviewers should be involved in the process to evaluate fulfilment of all standards for initial accreditation and standards for accreditation of study programmes for every study programme in the request. CAQA elects 2 reviewers from the pool of trained reviewers from the relevant scientific/artistic field who have 2 months to complete the reviews. CAQA ensures that reviewers remain anonymous. Administrative officers communicate with reviewers, prepare contracts, and send them the documentation.

### STEP 5 Reviewers' reports

The reviewers' task is to examine requests for initial accreditation of HEIs according to the [Instructions for reviewers for initial accreditation of HEIs](#) and for study programmes according to Instructions for reviewers for [study programmes of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level](#) or [PhD study programmes](#) respectively. Each reviewer analyzes the documentation for, both, institution and study programmes and assesses the fulfilment of the standards to identify which standards are fulfilled completely, which partially, and those that have not been fulfilled; which areas of work of an HEI satisfy the quality indicators, which areas are partially satisfied, as well as those which are unsatisfactory. As explained in [section 5.5](#), every standard is evaluated independently by each reviewer by both elaborating and grading, in the relevant form for initial accreditation of HEIs and in the forms for study programmes.

Administrative officers are in charge of receiving Reviewers' reports for [initial accreditation of HEIs](#), [study programmes of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level](#) or [PhD study programmes](#). All relevant documentation and reports are then given to the sub-commission for further processing.

### STEP 6 Site visit

After receiving reviewers' reports CAQA forms a team of experts for the site visit consisting of two CAQA members. In the process of planning the site-visit, CAQA communicates with the particular HEI. A site visit follows a predefined and slightly modified [Protocol](#). During a site visit the sub-commission interviews representatives of different groups in the HEI: management and non-teaching staff, and has a tour of the institution to see the space and facilities. A site visit lasts approximately 3 hours. Members of the CAQA team create the [Site-visit report](#).

#### STEP 7 Sub-commission report in the second step

After analysing reviewer's and site-visit reports and having an insight into the documentation as well as into the situation on the spot during the site visit, the sub-commission prepares a report for a CAQA meeting. This report consists of the review on grades and comments given by reviewers for every standard, description of the fulfilment of every standard for initial accreditation of HEI and study programmes.

#### STEP 8 Decision-making process and outcomes

Members of the sub-commission present the report at a CAQA meeting and it undergoes analysis and discussion, especially if reviewers' evaluations differ. Very often documentation is then presented and analysed at the meeting. After that CAQA members either accept or change the decision recommended by the sub-commission. Based on this report CAQA brings the decision on either *positive* or *negative opinion on the fulfilment of standards for initial accreditation*. This document is on average 6 pages long and is, then, sent to the Ministry.

In the case of CAQA's positive opinion, the Ministry issues a work permit to the HEI for one year. After one year, the HEI has to submit the request for accreditation of, both, the institution and study programmes.

## **7. Agency's internal quality assurance**

The development and implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms is needed to provide an account of the agency's capacity to adapt to new demands and trends and to permanently improve its actions while maintaining a solid and credible methodological framework and governance model.

CAQA has implemented so far 2 types of internal QA mechanisms: by using an external component such as feed-back analysis of questionnaires given to various stakeholders and by using internal components such as SWOT analysis, implementing measures for preventing conflict of interest, by interviewing staff, preparation of this self-evaluation report, etc.

Further explanation of internal and external mechanisms for QA of the agency are given in chapters 13 for internal and 11 for external mechanisms.

## 8. Agency's international activities

Since its establishment, CAQA has been active at the international level. CAQA is a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education - INQAAHE. In October 2009, CAQA was the host of the German Rectors Conference: *International Quality Assurance Networks in Higher Education*, held in Belgrade. The Commission was co-host together with the World University Service - WUS of the seminar "Self-assessment and quality assurance of HE institutions" held in July 2010 in Belgrade. CAQA hosted a Tempus CUBRICK project meeting in Belgrade on March 13-15, 2012 with a Workshop for the Agencies on external assessment. Since April 2013 CAQA became a full member of ENQA and since December 2014 CAQA was registered in EQAR.

Members of CAQA have participated in regional conferences dedicated to the reform of higher education and QA and visited quality assurance agencies in several countries (Ireland, Finland, Hungary, Croatia, Austria, Norway etc.), including the headquarters of ENQA. CAQA has regular meetings with members of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BUFG) to keep up to date with recent development of the EHEA. To achieve its goals more successfully, CAQA was a partner in several projects funded by TEMPUS, WUS and Council of Europe.

CAQA members are very active in almost all ENQA events including the General Assembly. CAQA was the host of ENQA Workshop on developing Quality Assurance procedures in Belgrade on 3-4 May, 2012.

Current composition of CAQA was established in July 2015. Since then international activities were even more intensified.

CAQA representatives have actively participated in ENQA general assemblies in Basel (2012), Vilnius (2013), Zagreb (2014), Dublin (2015), and Gloucester (2016).

Also, CAQA had its representatives at the ENQA member's forums in Prague (2013), St Petersburg (2014), Cordoba (2015), and Oslo (2017), at 10th European Quality Assurance Forum in London (November 2015), at ENQA trainings of agency reviewers in London, Oslo and Ljubljana, in EQUIP (Enhancing quality through innovative policy and practice) focus group in Vienna (March 2017), and at SPHERE seminar named "Building capacity and quality assurance for doctoral education" in Malmö (June 2016).

CAQA is very active when it comes to the international activities at the regional level in the South-East Europe, developing cooperation with quality assurance bodies of neighbouring countries. CAQA has participated at the meetings of national accreditation bodies in Zagreb (November 2015), Banja Luka (March 2017) and study visit to Slovenian accreditation committee (March 2016). Also CAQA representatives have also participated at the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting "Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training" held in Sarajevo (June 2016).

In Serbia, CAQA representatives participated at the meetings with the National Council for Higher Education of Sweden (November 2016), SPHERE seminar named "Joint programmes and degrees: Strategy, management, implementation" held in Novi Sad (March 2016), and EURASHE 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference - Centres of cooperation striving for excellence: professional higher education and the world of work held in Belgrade (April 2016).

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

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

*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.*

#### CAQA COMPLIANCE

As described in chapter 5 and chapter 6, CAQA undertakes external quality assurance activities at both institutional and programme levels on a regular basis, based upon LoHE Article 14. These activities are accreditation of HEIs (every 5 years), accreditation of study programmes (every 5 years), initial accreditation and external quality assessment of HEIs (every 5-8 years). These core functions of CAQA differ in their objectives. The aim of the accreditation process is to establish fulfilment of the threshold criteria enabling an HEI to run its activities, whereas the process of external quality control has a quality enhancement approach. During these activities, CAQA communicates with stakeholders (site visits, follow-up activities, surveys) with the aim of improving the HEI under evaluation as well as improving its own capacity for self-evaluation. CAQA also provides trainings for reviewers and for HEIs. CAQA regularly improves documents that serve as the legal basis for all these activities, such as amendments on rules for introducing students and labour market representatives into the evaluation process, and a whole set of new documents regarding external quality assessment.

The evaluation processes, criteria and procedures used by CAQA are pre-defined and publicly-available on the web-site. CAQA's evaluations are based on a self-assessment procedure by an HEI and external assessment by a group of national experts and international experts (reviewers), students and employer representatives.

CAQA undertakes 2 major types of evaluation processes: accreditation at institutional and study programme levels, and external quality control of HEIs with different objectives and procedures as explained in chapters 5 and 6. Site visits are part of the institutional evaluations – both accreditation and external quality control, but not for the accreditation of study programmes. The reason is that in the majority of accreditations those two processes: institutional and study programme evaluations take place at the same time, and in both processes experts on the site visit discuss study programmes with programme coordinators and with students and also have an insight into the resources for every study programme, so separate site visits for study programmes would be a waste of time and resources.

Evaluation reports are structured to describe the fulfilment of every evaluation standard and in the case of accreditation involve decisions and in the case of external quality control recommendations for improvements. Formal quality assurance decisions that are the outcome of the accreditation process are: Certificate of accreditation, Act of warning and Act of rejection which result in formal consequences regarding operating licenses.



An appeal procedure in the case of a negative accreditation decision is defined by the [LoHE](#) Article 16, and described in chapter 5. Results of HEI accreditation applications and [full reports on external quality control](#) of HEIs are publicly available on the web-site.

CAQA undertakes follow-up procedures to monitor the actions taken by HEIs on improvements suggested in either Act of warning, in the case of accreditation, or recommendations in the evaluation report in the case of external quality control of HEIs.

CAQA has shown during the period 2005-2017 that its activities in a) developing evaluation processes and methods and accompanying documents (standards and procedures), and b) completing the second round of accreditations and the first round of external quality control, have contributed to maintaining and enhancing of the quality of Serbian HE. CAQA also shows in this self-assessment report its compliance with internationally accepted quality standards – ESG. CAQA has created a [Pool of ca. 700 trained reviewers](#) for the process of accreditation and external quality control. By active participation in all events regarding QA in HE in the region as well as in the majority of ENQA events, and by organising its own events, CAQA has shown itself to be acting as a major driving force for the development of quality assurance in HE at national and regional level.

CAQA has shown in chapter 5 and chapter 6 of this report, and by its results in the previous period (presented in chapter 10.3.) that external quality assurance processes are at the core of the agency's activities and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives stated in its mission statement.

The CAQA's [mission statement](#) is a public document available on the CAQA web-site that contains the major goals/objectives of its work that are translated into the quality policy, a document that is also available on the web-site. The mission statement has 4 major points: to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of Serbian HE, to comply with internationally accepted quality standards, to create a pool of trained reviewers for the process of accreditation and external quality control, and to act as a main driving force for the development of quality assurance in HE of WB countries by fostering cooperation between agencies in the region.

CAQA's processes and results reflect its mission in all 4 components:

- a) CAQA contributed to the enhancement of the quality of Serbian HE,
- b) CAQA's standards comply with internationally accepted quality standards,
- c) CAQA created a pool of trained reviewers for the processes of accreditation and external quality control, and
- d) CAQA acts as a major driving force for the development of quality assurance in HE of WB countries by fostering cooperation between agencies in the region.

## 9.2 ESG 3.2 Official status

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

### CAQA COMPLIANCE

The foundation of the CAQA is provided by the LoHE, for the purpose of quality enhancement of higher education institutions. Establishment of CAQA by the LoHE as well as definition of its election procedures, jurisdiction, competences and activities, described in detail in [section 4.3](#), provided CAQA with the capacity to act with authority in the Serbian area of higher education. The work of the Commission is governed by [LoHE](#) Articles 13-17 and documents that regulate CAQA activities: [Rules of CAQA's work](#) (Annex 3) [Standards of CAQA's work](#) (Annex 2) and [Code of ethics](#) as explained in details in [section 4.5](#). CAQA, therefore, fully complies with the requirements of the legislative jurisdiction within which it operates.

This strong official status enabled CAQA to develop a quality assurance system in compliance with European standards.

## 9.3 ESG 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.*

### CAQA COMPLIANCE

CAQA is an independent and autonomous expert body working in conjunction with the MoES utilising, partly, its administrative and technical support, infrastructure, invoicing and payroll. CAQA has a separate sub-item in the state budget, which it manages independently. CAQA uses 3 offices plus a conference room in the state building with appropriate facilities. CAQA has its own database and website managed by CAQA's officers.

CAQA has operational independence from HEIs and the government in both the decision-making process (as described in [section 5.1](#) and [section 6.3](#)) as well as in financial management of its resources (as described in [section 4.4](#)). These are guaranteed by legislative act ([LoHE](#)) and numerous instruments of CAQA governance (Rules of CAQA work, Rules and regulations on standards and procedures, Standards of CAQA work).

CAQA's members are fully independent in the decision-making process by the [LoHE](#) Article 13, in which it says that CAQA decides at its meetings according to its own instrument of governance - Act of rules on CAQA work which regulates CAQA functioning, including decision making. The decisions are made at CAQA's meetings, based on a sub-commission's reports that includes 2 reviewers' reports and site visit reports.

The government, NCHE and HEIs do not interfere in the decision-making process. According to the [LoHE](#), NCHE adopts the standards and procedures on the recommendation of CAQA and this process has been straightforward so far. The NCHE has competences only in the appeal process. Again, the majority of its decisions have been in agreement with CAQA's.

According to the [LoHE](#) Article 14, CAQA appoints reviewers by its own decision from the list of reviewers made on the basis of a public call. In the recent changes of by-law, students and labour market representatives are now included as members of sub-commissions, but a final decision is still made by CAQA's members.

In conclusion: CAQA decides independently on the implementation of the evaluations, methods used, members of the evaluation teams, timetables, content of reports and accreditation decisions.

However, CAQA is still not satisfied with the procedure (defined by [LoHE](#)) about the Appeal procedure (explained in chapter 6) since NCHE is the body bringing the final decision on the appeals. ENQA panel stated in the recommendations to CAQA's fulfilment of ESG standard Independence that "it would be procedurally better to establish a separate Appeals Body". CAQA responded to this recommendation as explained in [section 10.7](#), by suggesting new article in the public discussion of the draft [LoHE](#) as explained in [section 12.14](#).

#### **9.4 ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis**

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

#### **CAQA COMPLIANCE**

CAQA is constantly monitoring itself and the higher education environment and responding to events as required, to ensure it maintains/improves the quality of its activities by updating/modifying its procedures to meet evolving circumstances on the HE scene. Part of that process is formalised in the form of its Annual Reports, and other events are covered by analysis of specific topics (themes). Here we give some examples of how decisions to analyse specific topics arose, and what impact the dissemination of such thematic analysis reports had on our stakeholder communities. The full [list of thematic analyses](#) carried out during the current reporting period is given at CAQA's website.

In the creation of the thematic or system-wide analysis CAQA members take part in deciding what to present and how, whereas the administrative staff help in the analysis and technical preparations of presentations/publications. Very often they, also, help in the creative part of the analysis since their expertise and relatively long work in CAQA office provided the necessary experience. For the sectorial analysis CAQA members and officers from the particular field are involved.

The objectives of creating thematic and system-wide analyses are different: 1. providing an analysis for decision makers to help them making the right decisions, 2. presenting to the wider public the impact of implementing the QA system on HEIs and HE in general by placing the analyses on the web-page and 3. disseminating the CAQA work and achievements at conferences to obtain feedback from the academic community. Examples within the first objective are so-called sectorial analyses in different fields (medicine and agriculture) and system wide analyses of different types of HEIs: polytechnics and HEI units. Information from these analyses should serve the Ministry to it plan the number of students for enrolling to public HEIs and NCHE to plan development of HE in Serbia.

An example of the impact of the system-wide analysis on decision makers is the case when NCHE brought the decision on stopping the accreditation of HEI units outside of their seat, as the system-wide analysis has shown that already accredited units are well distributed throughout Serbia and for now there is no need for new HEIs of that type.

The analyses under the second and third objective, however, have more impact in terms of reflecting to CAQA's work and being a trigger for change. This was the case for all other thematic analyses listed on our web page and presented at various conferences, such as [TREND](#) which has become an academic forum that CAQA members have participate every year since 2007. Discussions at these meetings had an impact on standard revision done by CAQA as well as on the contribution of CAQA to changes of the LoHE. Changes of standards for doctoral studies were, also, initiated after a TREND conference where problems of plagiarism and its overcoming as well as a rapid increase in the number of PhDs in Serbia were discussed. The following year changes of the LoHE took place that enabled CAQA to suggest the changes of the [Standards for accreditation of doctoral study programmes](#) by introducing the new standard *Transparency*. At present CAQA has a new procedure regarding the evaluation of the validity of PhD diplomas explained in details in [section 14.3](#).

### **9.5 ESG 3.5 Resources**

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

#### **CAQA COMPLIANCE**

CAQA has adequate resources (human, financial and infrastructural) to run external quality assurance processes in an effective and efficient manner as demonstrated by approximately 5300 evaluations completed in 12 years. The CAQA structure together with the activities of various groups was described in [section 4.5](#) and CAQA's evaluations done so far in Table 5. Administrative support is provided by the MoES, providing and paying for 1 officer, and CAQA has hired 7 additional staff paid from the budget line of the Commission.

For each evaluation process, CAQA appoints 2 to 3 reviewers from the pool of external reviewers plus students and labour market representatives for institutional evaluations. CAQA has a very appropriate premises.

According to the [LoHE](#) Article13, financial resources for CAQA activities are obtained by the [Accreditation fees](#) that are paid by HEIs into a special budget line of the MoES account, but the exclusive right for managing these financial resources is reserved for the president of CAQA. CAQA has operational autonomy of its budget. Finances are described in detail in [section 4.4. Review of CAQA's finances for the period 2012-2016](#) is presented in on the website (Annex 4). The overall budget of CAQA in this period was 623.112.179,08 RSD. Total expenditure in the same period was 305.193.440,65 RSD out of which 288.432.566,71 was for the work of CAQA members, reviewers and administration in CAQA office.

However, provision of adequate resources is a constant challenge, of which CAQA is well-aware and which CAQA is constantly trying to improve. Thus, most of the weaknesses identified in the previous CAQA SWOT analysis is also present in the present [SWOT analysis](#) (W1-5) referring to quantitative and qualitative aspects of human resources. While this has been an issue high on CAQA's strategic agenda, a major factor contributing to the uncertainty in provision of human resources is beyond CAQA's control; namely a period of constant change within the Serbian government and Ministries (particularly MoES and Finance). Thus, since the previous SAR (2012) the MoES has had three ministers, senior staff within the Ministry have changed three times, and two new Laws on Higher Education have been drafted, scrapped and redrafted from the beginning. This lack of continuity and uncertainty on future directions planned for QA in Serbia has made it very difficult to get concrete decisions from the Ministry on CAQA human resources. So, the achievements of CAQA in providing its accreditation services to HEIs have taken place despite challenges from its line ministry (MoES) and not because of its practical support, but due to the continuity of CAQA staff (the majority of officers were present in 2012) and, consequently, their expertise in the area of QA. Commitment and enthusiasm of CAQA members also contribute to the effectiveness of CAQA.

A new version of the LoHE will be entering parliamentary procedure after the summer (2017) and this is expected to become Law early in 2018 [?] some time. The draft new LoHE foresees CAQA becoming an agency and expanding its remit. In consequence, MoES is reluctant to respond to requests coming regularly from CAQA for improvements in human, financial and infrastructural resources as recommended in the previous ENQA recommendations on CAQA.

Nevertheless, at least CAQA has been able to maintain continuity of the accumulated expertise of its administrative and technical support. CAQA's staff has attended several conferences and participated in creation of system-wide and thematic analyses. CAQA's IT expert has successfully created a CAQA database and CAQA became independent of the Ministry's assistance in this matter. In addition, considerable improvements have been made in the content and functioning of the CAQA web site. For example, an extensive section of the web site is now available in English with translations of many CAQA reports and accreditation information.

Specific strategic achievements by CAQA in overcoming weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis related to human resources are:

1. The maintenance of staff number and enhancement of their expertise by a) involving them in methodological and even strategic discussions during recent processes of standard revision and public discussions on new the LoHE, b) involving them in the preparations of thematic and system wide analyses and c) enabling them to participate at conferences (2 regional conferences of agencies for QA and several TREND conferences):
2. The maintenance of the enthusiasm and commitment of the new CAQA members (out of 17 members only 4 members are from the period before 2015), so that CAQA as a team has continued to achieve the level of its activities as in the previous period - both in terms of number of evaluations as well as in changing standards (and recommending changes in the LoHE), procedures and methodologies. Details on these activities are presented in [chapter 14](#).

3. The maintenance of the pool of reviewers at the same level as before. The lack of international reviewers due to the lack of finances has been occasionally overcome by using foreigners who live in Serbia or by our teachers or scientists that live abroad (members of the Serbian diaspora).

Further progress in tackling inadequacies in human resources are likely to be resolved once the new Accreditation Agency is constituted (expected some time in 2018).

### **9.6 ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct**

*Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.*

#### **CAQA COMPLIANCE**

CAQA has developed an internal reflection mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement) which is:

- I. Collection and analysis of feedback questionnaires from different stakeholder groups to assess their views on the quality provided by CAQA's current procedures and activities (presented in [chapter 11](#))
- II. Comparison of trends across feedback surveys from each round of accreditation to assess the extent to which CAQA is enhancing the quality and integrity of its activities, to improve the service it provides to its stakeholders (also presented in [chapter 11](#))
- III. SWOT analysis (presented in [chapter 13](#)) done by the participation of all members of CAQA and CAQA administrative staff
- IV. Suggestions for improvements from all CAQA present and former members and administrative staff.

I. and II. CAQA established an external feedback mechanism in the form of a questionnaire to collect feedback from stakeholder groups. Feedback surveys are currently completed by 3 stakeholder groups: reviewers (introduced in 2017), reviewed institutions (in 2011, 2015 and 2017) and students (in 2011 and 2015). The feedback questionnaire has had 10 common questions on each occasion on aspects of CAQA's activities, impact of CAQA's activities and CAQA's members' competences, as presented in [chapter 11](#). The 10 questions are as follows:

*Question 1: Are the recommendations and decisions of CAQA independent from external influence?*

*Question 2: To what degree does the CAQA organize and carry out the accreditation process in an effective and efficient manner?*

*Question 3: To what degree does CAQA consistently apply standards and guidelines?*

*Question 4: Are the standards, guidelines and recommendations of CAQA clear and understandable?*

*Question 5: Is it easy to provide all necessary data and information required by standards and guidelines?*

*Question 6: Are CAQA criteria relevant for evaluating the quality of your institution?*



*Question 7: Are CAQA criteria relevant for evaluating the quality of your study programmes?*

*Question 8: To what degree does the accreditation process contribute to improving the quality of study programmes?*

*Question 9: How much does the accreditation process support innovativeness?*

*Question 10: How would you rate the professionalism, competence and ethics of the CAQA members?*

Analysis of feedback questionnaires shows that all the stakeholders had positive opinion about the accreditation process, CAQA criteria, recommendations and decisions, as well as about the CAQA members' competences. This statement is well-illustrated by the distribution of answers within a sample of 145 HEIs and 118 reviewers from 2017, with results for questions 2 and 3, representative of all 10 questions, shown below in Figures 1 to 4. [Full analysis for 2017](#) is available at CAQA website.

Fig 1. Distribution of answers from HEIs to question 2 (*To what degree does CAQA organize and carry out the accreditation process in an effective and efficient manner?*)

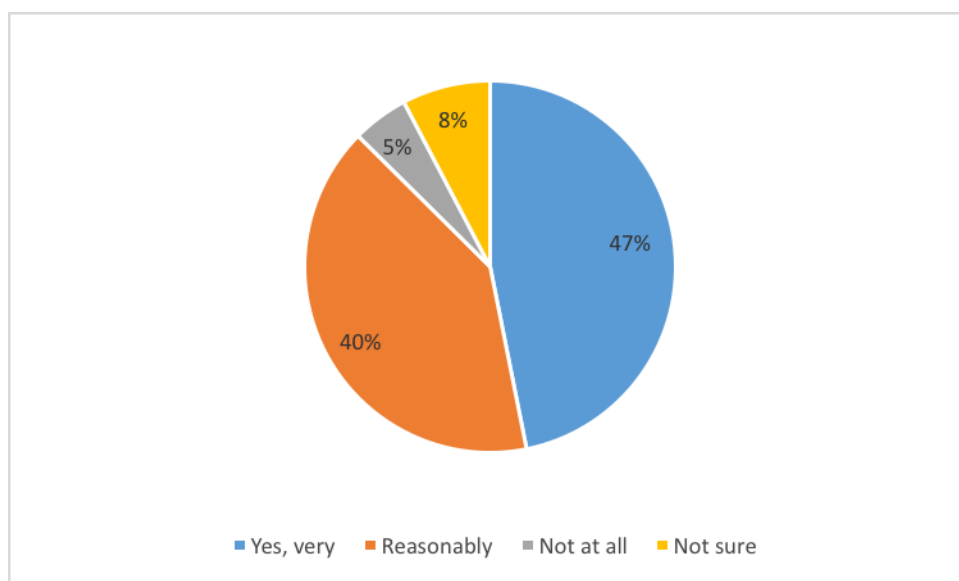


Fig 2. Distribution of answers from reviewers to question 2 (*To what degree does CAQA organize and carry out the accreditation process in an effective and efficient manner?*)

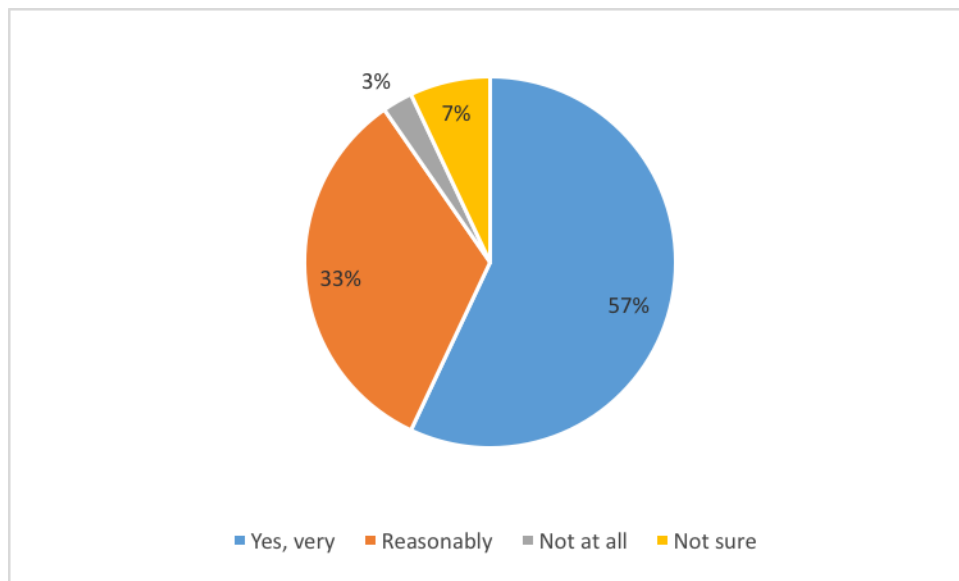


Fig 3. Distribution of answers from HEIs to question 3 (*To what degree does CAQA consistently apply standards and guidelines?*) in the sample of HEIs

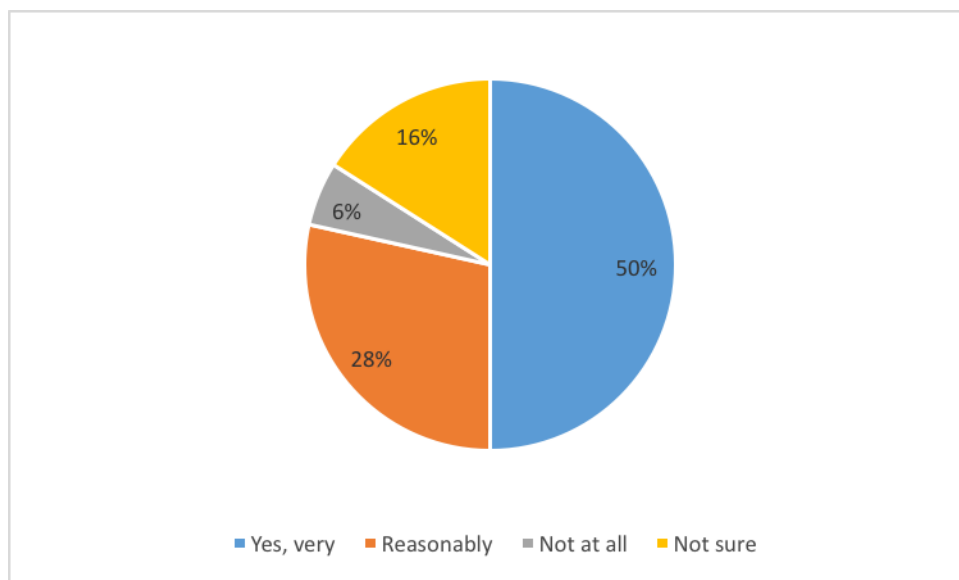
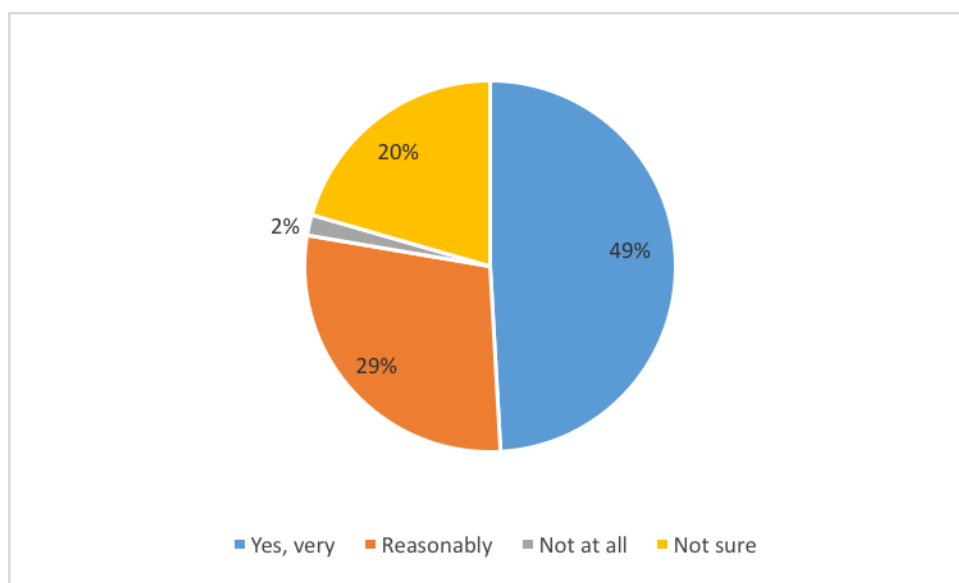




Fig. 4. Distribution of answers from reviewers to question 3 (*To what degree does CAQA consistently applied standards and guidelines?*)



III. All current and some former CAQA members and officers were consulted for their contributions to SWOT analysis. We can, therefore, conclude that all components of the SWOT analysis presented in [chapter 13](#) are the result of the combined opinions of all people that belong or belonged to CAQA and, therefore, have an insight to all weaknesses and strengths of CAQA as well as all opportunities and threats in the present CAQA environment.

IV. Analyses of the questionnaire and SWOT analysis form the basis for discussions within CAQA, with old CAQA members and with CAQA staff to reflect on internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of CAQA's activities. In this way, CAQA identifies what should be changed to enable a more effective agency in which the majority of the present weaknesses stated in the SWOT analysis would be alleviated. All this is related to the legislation and should be put in the new LoHE. This is why CAQA presented on its website in detail its [Analysis](#) of the draft LoHE with recommendations for improvements as a contribution to the public debate.

### **9.7 ESG 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies**

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

This is the second external review of CAQA. The first external review of CAQA was done in 2012, and the decision on ENQA membership was brought in April 2013. CAQA was listed in EQAR in December 2014.

## 10. Compliance with European Standards and guidelines (Part 2)

### 10.1 ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

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

#### CAQA COMPLIANCE

CAQA external quality assurance procedures take into account the effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes described in ESG Part 1. Here we present parallel of ESG and CAQA external evaluation standards to show that each of the standards in ESG Part 1 is covered by 4 major evaluation processes taken by CAQA: accreditation of HEIs, accreditation of study programmes, initial accreditation and audit. Standards for these evaluations are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Standards for CAQA external evaluations

<p><b>I. Accreditation of HEIs</b></p> <p>I.1. Basic goals and objectives of HEI I.2. Planning and control I.3. Organization and administration I.4. Studies I.5. Scientific research and artistic work I.6. Teaching staff I.7. Non-teaching staff I.8. Students I.9. Premises and equipment I.10. Library, textbooks and IT support I.11. Sources of finances I.12. Internal mechanisms for QA I.13. Transparency</p>	<p><b>II. Accreditation of study programmes</b></p> <p>II.1. Structure of the study programme II.2. Purpose of the study programme II.3. Objectives of the study programme II.4. Competences of graduated students II.5. Curriculum II.6. Quality, modernity and international compatibility of the study programme II.7. Admission of students II.8. Grading and progress of students II.9. Teaching staff II.10. Organizational and material resources II.11. Quality control II.12. Distance learning</p>
<p><b>III. Initial accreditation</b></p> <p>III.1. Objectives and main tasks of HEI III.2. Organization of HEI III.3. Studies III.4. Scientific research and artistic work III.5. Quality of teachers and assistants III.6. Requirements regarding the number of teachers and assistants III.7. Non-teaching staff III.8. Students III.9. Premises and equipment III.10. Library, textbooks and IT support III.11. Provision of financial resources III.12. Internal mechanisms for QA</p>	<p><b>IV. Audit (standards for self-evaluation)</b></p> <p>IV.1. Strategy of QA IV.2. Standards and procedures of QA IV.3. System of QA IV.4. Quality of study programmes IV.5. Quality of teaching process IV.6. Quality of scientific research, artistic and professional work IV.7. Quality of teachers and associates IV.8. Quality of students IV.9. Quality of textbooks, literature, library and IT resources IV.10. Quality of HEI management and non-teaching support IV.11. Quality of premises and equipment IV.12. Finances IV.13. Student role in self-evaluation and quality control IV.14. Systematic surveillance and periodic quality control</p>

Standards in ESG Part 1 are addressed in all evaluation processes done by CAQA as presented in Table 4:

Table 4. Mapping of ESG Part 1 to standards for CAQA evaluations as listed in Table 3.

<b>CAQA standards for:</b>	<b>I. Accreditation of HEIs</b>	<b>II. Accreditation of study programmes</b>	<b>III. Initial accreditation</b>	<b>IV. Self-evaluation as a basis for audit</b>
<b><i>ESG Part 1:</i></b>				
<b><i>1.1 Policy for quality assurance</i></b>	I.1, I.12	II.11	III.1, III.12	IV. 1, IV.3
<b><i>1.2 Design and approval of programmes</i></b>	I.4, I.5	II.1, II.5, II.6, II.12	III.3, III.4	IV.4, IV.6
<b><i>1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment</i></b>	I.4, I.8	II.4, II.8, II.5	III.3, III.8	IV.4, IV.5, IV.8
<b><i>1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification</i></b>	I.8	II.7, II.8	III.8	IV.8
<b><i>1.5 Teaching staff</i></b>	I.5, I.6	II.9	III.4, III.5, III.6	IV.6, IV.7
<b><i>1.6 Learning resources and student support</i></b>	I.7, I.9, I.10, I.11	II.10	III.7, III.9, III.10, III.11	IV.9, IV.10, IV.11, IV.12
<b><i>1.7 Information management</i></b>	I.2, I.3	II.11	III.2	IV.3, IV.10
<b><i>1.8 Public information</i></b>	I.13	II.9, II.2	Available after the positive decision on initial accreditation	IV.1, IV.2, IV.4, IV.7
<b><i>1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes</i></b>	I.12	II.11	III.12	IV.1, IV.2, IV.3
<b><i>1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance</i></b>	In Serbia, accreditation of HEIs is a prerequisite for operating licence. Serbian HEIs undergo mandatory accreditation every 5 years	In Serbia, study programmes undergo mandatory accreditation every 5 years	Initial accreditation is valid for one year, after that HEI enters regular accreditation procedure	Audit, based on self-evaluation is periodic activity (5-8 years) and HEIs undergo self-evaluation every 3 years

Here we also present a comprehensive explanation of how each of the standards in ESG Part 1 is covered by the two most frequent evaluation processes done by CAQA: accreditation of HEIs and accreditation of study programmes of first and second level. Relevance of standards for doctoral studies will be mentioned when necessary. Standards are labelled according to Table 3.

### ***ESG 1.1 Policy for quality assurance***

*Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.*

#### I. Accreditation of HEIs

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standards I.1 and I.12 for [accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5). Standard I.1 states that ‘a higher education institution shall have the basic goals and objectives that are in line with the objectives of higher education set forth in the Law’ which directs the main policy of every HEI. Reviewers evaluate if the basic goals and objectives of HEI have been formally adopted and publicised at HEIs website. However, standard I.12 defines the policy for QA in more details. It states that ‘the higher education institution shall approve and carry out the quality assurance strategy in its work’. Reviewers evaluate whether the HEI: approved a clear and comprehensively formulated strategy of quality assurance in all aspects of its activities; has special commission for QA; takes the necessary measures to realize the strategy for quality assurance and eliminate any irregularities observed, etc. Policy for QA is discussed in detail with members of the HEI’s commission for quality assurance during the site visit.

#### II. Accreditation of study programme

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standard II.11 for [accreditation of study programmes](#) (Annex 6). Standard II.11 states that the quality control of the study programme shall be regularly carried out by means of self-assessment and external quality control. By item 11.3 of the guidelines, quality assessment of the study programme involves an active role of students and their evaluation of the quality of programme. Reviewers assess fulfilment of this standard by analysing self-evaluation report of the study programme which includes results of students questionnaires and data about labour market satisfaction.

### ***ESG 1.2 Design and approval of programmes***

*Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.*

### I. Accreditation of HEIs

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standards I.4 and I.5 for [accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5). Standard I.4 states that the ‘the content of the qualification and diploma of individual types and study levels correspond to the character and objectives of the study programmes and that study programmes of higher education institution comply with the basic tasks and objectives and shall serve their achievement.’ The reviewers check whether the programmes are approved by HEIs competent bodies, and whether the programmes are accredited. The reviewers also check whether programmes are designed according to guidelines for implementation of standard I.4 related to the type and level of studies (4.1.1-4.1.6) and to the study programmes (4.2.1-4.2.7). Standard I.5 states that the higher education institution which carries out academic studies shall have an organized scientific research and artistic work. Item 5.4 in the guidelines of this standard states that ‘the knowledge acquired by higher education institution by implementing scientific research and artistic work shall be included in the teaching process’.

### II. Accreditation of study programme

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standard II.1, II.5, II.6 and II.12 for [accreditation of study programmes](#) (Annex 6). Standard II.1 defines the structure of the study programme. Guideline item 1.1 of Standard II.1 states that the study programme has the following elements: name and objectives of study programmes; type of studies and outcomes of the learning process; professional, academic, namely scientific title; conditions of admission to the study programme; list of obligatory and optional study areas, the method of the study and the time needed for individual types of studies; credits of each course expressed in terms of the European credit transfer system (ECTS); credit values of the final thesis in the basic, specialist and master studies, namely doctoral dissertation, expressed in ECTS credits; preconditions for admission to individual courses or groups of courses; manner of choice of courses; conditions for transfer to other study programmes within the same or related study areas; other issues of significance for the realization of study programmes. Item 1.2 provides the volume of various types of study in ECTS credits.

Standard II.5 gives a comprehensive description of curriculum structure for various types of study programmes. Guideline item 5.2 of specifies in detail description of courses. The description of courses contains the name, type of the course, the year and semester of studies, the number of ECTS credits, name of the teacher, objective of the course with expected outcomes, knowledge and competences, preconditions for attendance of the course, content of the course, recommended literature, teaching methods, the way of assessment of knowledge and grading system and other data.

Standard II.6 states that the study programme should be designed so that it is comparable to the similar programmes of the higher education institutions abroad, and specifically within the European education area. Standard II.12 provides specific requirements for designing programmes of distance learning.

For assessing standards II.1, II.5, II.6 and II.12 reviewers analyse the documentation for accreditation of the study programme prepared by HEI according to the [Instructions for reviewers](#). This contains the Book of courses with details mentioned above and comparative analysis of the study programme with three related foreign study programmes.

Documentation also contains acts on approval of the study programme issued by competent bodies of HEI (Teaching Council, University Senate). Study programmes - their structure and curriculum are also discussed during the site-visit in interviews with the teachers who are responsible for study programmes.

### ***ESG 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment***

*Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.*

#### I. Accreditation of HEIs

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standards I.4 and I.8 for [accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5). Guideline 4.2.1 for standard I.4 states that each study programme is connected to a harmonized whole which includes the objectives, structure and contents, policies and procedures of admission of students, learning methods and way of testing knowledge, learning outcomes and students' competences. Furthermore item 8.5 of standard I.8 states that the success of students in mastering individual courses is monitored regularly and assessed during the teaching process. The overall grade of a student in one course consists of the points obtained on pre-examination obligations and points for knowledge proven at the final exam. The minimum share of points for pre-examination obligations of the student attending the teaching in the overall points shall be 30%, and the maximum 70%. In this way students are encouraged to actively participate in the teaching process what is, also reflected in the assessment method. Reviewers check whether HEI has adopted appropriate rules for grading and assessment. The level of student participation in the learning process is, also, checked during the site visit by interviewing student representatives of the HEI. Student representatives in the sub-commission have an active role in these interviews.

#### II. Accreditation of study programme

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standard II.4, II.5 and II.8 for [accreditation of study programmes](#) (Annex 6). Standard II.8 states: “The grading of the students shall be based on the permanent monitoring of the work of students and on the credits gained in fulfilment of pre-examination duties and the exam itself”. Items 8.4-8.6 foresee that the success of the student in mastering a certain course shall be permanently monitored during the teaching and expressed in points; the minimum number of points achievable by fulfilling the obligations during the teaching is 30 and the maximum 70; each course in the study programme shall have a clear and transparent way of earning the points. How the points can be earned during the teaching shall depend on the number of points the student earns during the teaching or performing the pre exam obligation and at the exam. During the school year students are encouraged to actively participate in the teaching process. Several HEIs have introduced methods of active teaching-learning through Tempus projects (for example HERBS and RAHES). Standard II.4 states that students, by completing a study programme acquire both, general and course-specific competences. New interactive teaching methods contribute towards developing critical and self-critical capabilities as stated in item 4.1 of guidelines of standard II.4.

Reviewers assess (following [Instructions for reviewers](#)) teaching, learning and assessment methods for every course by analysing the description of courses containing the name, type of the course, the year and semester of studies, the number of ECTS credits, name of the teacher, objective of the course with expected outcomes, knowledge and competences, preconditions for attendance of the course, content of the course, recommended literature, teaching methods, the way of assessment of knowledge and grading system and other data, as stated in item 5.2 of guidelines of standard II.5. This information is contained in the Book of courses which is the major attachment of standard II.5.

### ***ESG 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification***

*Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.*

#### I. Accreditation of HEIs

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standard I.8 for [accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5). Standard I.8 states that the HEI determines the terms of admission of students, selects the candidates according to them, and provides the necessary facilities for successful mastering of the study programmes. Guidelines’ items 8.1 - 8.3 state procedure for admission of students and items 8.4 and 8.5 describe the ways of student progression. It is stated that the HEI permanently and systematically follows the achievements of the students and their advancement in each study programme and takes measures of support in the case of an unsatisfactory outcome. Item 8.6 foresees the transparency of the student progression. Recognition of diplomas is regulated by [LoHE](#) articles 104 and 105, and certification by [LoHE](#) articles 99-103). Reviewers check data on student admission, and analyse statistical data on student progression, as well as the ratio of graduated versus enrolled students at the HEI as a whole.

#### II. Accreditation of study programme

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standards II.7 and II.8 for [accreditation of study programmes](#) (Annex 6). Standard II.7 states that an HEI enrolls the students to a corresponding study programme based on the success in their previous schooling and entrance tests, aptitudes and capacities. Item 7.1 foresees that the number of students enrolled to a corresponding study programme is determined by space and human resources available. Progression of students is regulated by standard II.8: “The grading of the students shall be based on the permanent monitoring of the work of students and on the credits gained in fulfilment of pre-examination duties and the exam itself”. Recognition and certification are regulated by the [LoHE](#). Reviewers assess, following [Instructions for reviewers](#), whether the number of students enrolling the first year of studies is in compliance with the premises and human resources available; whether the entrance exam is appropriate. Reviewers assess student progression by statistical data on student progression, as well as the ratio of graduated versus enrolled students for the study programme. Assessment of student progression in the case of [Doctoral studies](#) (Annex 7). is based on items 8.3 and 8.4 of standard 8 for doctoral studies in science (related to the progress in research and measured by number of publications) and doctoral studies in arts (related to the progress in artistic work).



### ***ESG 1.5 Teaching staff***

*Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.*

#### I. Accreditation of HEIs

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standards I.5, I.6 and I.13 for [accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5). Standard I.6 states that the HEI employs the teaching staff whose scientific, artistic and teaching activities enable achievement of the basic goals and objectives of the institution and competently realize the study programmes and perform other mandated goals. Guidelines 6.1 and 6.2 specify workload requirements of the teaching staff and guidelines 6.3 – 6.5 specify recruitment and competences of teaching staff. Development of teaching staff is regulated by guideline item 6.6 stating that HEI shall provide the teachers and associates with the conditions for scientific, artistic and professional advancement and development. Item 5.5. of standard I.5 specifies that HEI encourages and ensures the conditions to the teaching staff to actively take part in the scientific research, artistic and professional activities and to publish the results of their work. Reviewers have detailed [Instructions for reviewers](#) for assessing whether the HEI employs a sufficient number of teaching staff and for assessing their competences. Reviewers also check whether the HEI has adopted a plan for scientific or artistic research. Reviewers have an insight into the list of teachers involved in scientific projects and their publications. The HEIs enable transparency of their teaching staff by publishing on its website the list of teachers and associates with their qualifications as stated in item 13.3 of standard I.13 guidelines. Transparency of the recruitment process is regulated by [LoHE](#), Article 65 (stating the obligation of the HEI to announce a public call for a teaching post) and the HEI Statute.

#### II. Accreditation of study programme

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standard II.9 for [accreditation of study programmes](#) (Annex 6) which states: “The teaching staff is recruited for the implementation of the study programme with necessary scientific, artistic and professional qualifications”. According to items 9.1 and 9.2 of the guidelines the number of teachers and associates corresponds to the requirements of the study programme and depends on the number of courses and number of lessons. Item 9.3 refers to the competences of teachers stating that the scientific, artistic and professional qualifications of the teaching staff shall correspond to the education and scientific field and the level of their responsibilities. A teacher must have at least five references in the related scientific, artistic or professional area. A teacher involved in the realization of a professional master study programme in addition to this, provides information on participation in scientific, artistic, commercial and professional projects realized in cooperation with industry. For [Doctoral studies](#) (Annex 7), in sciences standard 9 defines in detail the scientific research competences for teachers and mentors. Standard 9 for doctoral studies of arts defines in detail the artistic research and achievements of teachers and mentors. Transparency of the teaching staff of the study programme is foreseen by item 9.4 of the standard guidelines: data on the teachers and associates (CV, data on election, references) must be available to the public.



Transparency of the recruitment process is regulated by [LoHE](#), Article 65 (stating the obligation of an HEI to announce a public call for a teaching post) and the HEI Statute. Teacher competences are checked by reviewers according to the [Instructions for reviewers](#) by primarily analysing the Book of teachers (the major attachment for standard II.9) and other relevant attachments. For doctoral study programmes reviewers, following [Instructions for reviewers of doctoral studies](#) also check the Book of mentors.

### ***ESG 1.6 Learning resources and student support***

*Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.*

#### I. Accreditation of HEIs

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standards I.7, I.9, I.10 and I.11 for [accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5). Standard I.7 defines the necessary human resources in student support units: library, student service, IT centre and legal advice. Standard I.9 states that the HEI shall provide premises and equipment needed for good performance of all forms of teaching. Items 9.1 - 9.6 of the guidelines specify the minimal requirements for premises and equipment. Learning resources are covered by standard I.10 stating that the HEI shall have an appropriate library equipped with all necessary textbooks for the study and IT resources and services used for the achievement of the basic goals. Guidelines 10.1 – 10.3 specify quantitative requirements for the library fund, IT equipment and textbooks. The sources of finance of the HEI, as stated in standard I.11, should be sufficient to ensure the quality of teaching. Reviewers have detailed [Instructions](#) for assessing if the HEI meets minimal requirements for learning resources and student support in a form of various lists: List of non-teaching staff with their qualifications and duties, List of teaching premises with their area, List of laboratories, List of valuable equipment, List of library fund, List of textbooks. Reviewers also check financial reports for the last 3 years and financial plan for the current year. Learning resources and student support services are thoroughly checked by the sub-commission during the site visit.

#### II. Accreditation of study programme

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standard II.10 for [accreditation of study programmes](#) (Annex 6) which states: “For the realization of a study programme adequate human, spatial, technical, library and other resources must be provided, adequate to the character of the study programme and the anticipated number of students”. Assessment of the financial resources is foreseen in standard I.11 for accreditation of HEIs and is elaborated above. It is necessary to emphasise that in our QA system study programmes are as a rule, accredited in parallel with the accreditation of the HEI. All other learning resources for accreditation of a study programme are described in detail in items 10.1 - 10.6 of the guidelines for standard II.6. Reviewers check the material resources by analysing the attachments for this standard according to [Instructions for reviewers](#). Learning resources and student support services are thoroughly checked by the sub-commission during the site visit to HEI for every study programme. Particular attention on material resources is paid to evaluation of doctoral study programmes where [Instructions for reviewers of doctoral study programmes](#) also foresee the assessment of the budget for scientific/artistic work.

**ESG 1.7 Information management**

*Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.*

I. Accreditation of HEIs

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standards I.2 and I.3 for [accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5). Standard I.2 states that the HEI plans and controls the results of all the forms of educational, scientific, artistic, research and professional activities. Item 2.1 of the guidelines specifies that planning is based on the systematic and permanent compilation of data and their professional analysis. According to item 2.2 the control is carried out by means of comparison of planned and achieved results and comparison of the HEI with its results in the past and with the results of a similar HEI in the country and abroad. Standard I.3 states that the HEI should have an appropriate organizational structure and administration system for the achievement of goals and objectives. Reviewers check the fulfilment of these standards by analysing annual reports of the HEI containing all relevant information on its activities. This aspect of the HEI is, also, discussed during the site-visit in interviews with the HEI management and IT experts.

II. Accreditation of study programme

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standard II.11 for [accreditation of study programmes](#) (Annex 6), item 11.1 of the guidelines stating that the HEI regularly and systematically follows up implementation of the study programme and takes measures for quality enhancement in terms of curriculum, teaching, teaching staff, grading of students, textbooks and literature. Reviewers analyse the results of self-evaluation of the study programme according to the [Instructions for reviewers](#).

**ESG 1.8 Public information**

*Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.*

I. Accreditation of HEIs

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standard I.13 for [accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5). Standard I.13 states that the HEI publishes complete, precise, clear and accessible information of its work intended for students, potential students and other stakeholders. Items 13.2 and 13.3 of the guidelines specify that the HEI shall publish its goals, objectives, expected educational outcomes, description of study programmes and description of courses offered and programmes delivered, conditions of enrolment and transfer of ECTS credits, the amount of the school fee, the Statute of the institution and its accreditation, strategy for quality assurance, financial results and other relevant data, as well as the list of teachers and associates with their qualifications and engagement in the HEI. Reviewers check whether the requested information is published on the web site of the institution.

## II. Accreditation of study programme

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standards II.2 and II.9 for [accreditation of study programmes](#) (Annex 6). Standard II.2 states: “The study programme has clearly defined purpose and the role in the education system, accessible to the public”. Item 9.4 from the guidelines of standard II.9 states that data about the teachers and associates (CV, data on election, references) must be available to the public. Reviewers check whether the information on the HEI website contains the necessary data on the study programme.

For [Doctoral study programmes](#) (Annex 7) there is an additional standard 12: *Transparency* stating that the HEI ensures public availability of the study programme and the PhD thesis, as the final work of doctoral academic studies. According to item 12.1 of the guidelines the institution is obliged to establish a digital repository, where the electronic versions of defended PhD theses are kept permanently, together with the committee report on the evaluation of the thesis, information about the mentor, structure of the committee and the candidate’s scientific works, whose publication was a pre-condition for the defence, as well as to make all the information publicly available on the official website. According to item 12.2 the institution is obliged to make the information about the mentors, their competence and previous mentorships publicly available on the official website. Reviewers check whether these requirements are met, following the [Instructions for reviewers](#).

### ***ESG 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes***

*Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.*

## I. Accreditation of HEIs

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standard I.12 for [accreditation of HEIs](#) (Annex 5). Standard I.12 states that the HEI shall approve and carry out the quality assurance strategy in all aspects of its work. In particular, item 12.3 of the guidelines states that the HEI shall follow up the quality of teaching, examinations, success of students and studies on the whole and on individual courses, quality of textbooks and take special measures for elimination of deficiencies observed. The role of students in these processes is stated in item 12.4. The reviewers assess the process of on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes by analysing the Self-evaluation report of the HEI. Additional information on this matter is gathered during the site-visit and in particular during the interview with the HEI’s commission for quality assurance.

## II. Accreditation of study programme

This standard is assessed by reviewers according to CAQA standards II.11 for [accreditation of study programmes](#) (Annex 6). According to items 11.1-11.3 of the guidelines, quality control systematically follows up the implementation and measures for quality enhancement in terms of curriculum, teaching, teaching staff, grading of students, textbooks and literature.

Quality assessment of the study programme involves an active role of students and their evaluation of the quality of the programme. Reviewers analyse the results of self-evaluation of the study programme according to the [Instructions for reviewers](#).

***ESG 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance***

*Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.*

I. Accreditation of HEIs

According to the LoHE, Serbian HEIs and programmes undergo mandatory accreditation every five years, which is a prerequisite for the operating licence.

III. Accreditation of study programme

According to the LoHE, quality control of the study programme is carried out in a period set to be three years in the case of self-assessment, and a maximum of five years for external quality control.

**10.2 ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose**

*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.*

**CAQA COMPLIANCE**

All external quality assurance processes that CAQA undertakes are designed specifically to ensure they are fit for purpose to achieve the aims and objectives set for them. As explained in [section 5.1](#) the aims and objectives of these processes are:

- Accreditation as a periodical activity by CAQA in which CAQA decides if threshold criteria are met for the accreditation of either an institution or study programme. The process results in issuing a decision and certificate of accreditation, act of warning or decision on rejection that serve for obtaining or not obtaining the operating licence from the Ministry.
- Initial accreditation in which CAQA establishes if an institution in foundation fulfils the set of standards for this type of evaluation. After one year a HEI has to apply for accreditation of all programmes and the institution.
- External quality control (audit), which is also a periodic activity of CAQA and which represents auditing a set of activities based upon a self-evaluation report done by the HEI, completed by a report. Focus in the evaluation process of this type is enhancement of the quality system of the HEI.

Development of such a complex QA system arose because at the beginning of implementing external evaluation (2007) none of the HEIs had a licence based upon quality control and at the same time a large number of private institutions were founded. This is why the accreditation process had to be implemented first. Now, when the majority of HEIs have been accredited, their external quality control represents a check of the quality of their performances. Steps and procedures for these processes differ to fit their purpose, as described in chapter 6. The common features of all these evaluation processes are: an independent decision-making process done by competent professionals, regular trainings of reviewers, use of trained reviewers, participation of students and labour market representatives, use of a self-evaluation report as the basis of institutional evaluation, etc.

However, in the past 5 years it became obvious that some methodologies do not fit the purpose any more and that there is a need for a change and introduction of new procedures as well as new standards and guidelines. This will be described in the next chapter in [section 10.3](#) and [section 10.5](#).

Stakeholders (academic community, students, labour market representatives) were involved during the public discussions when the first standards and guidelines were brought in in 2007. Since then, for every important change in methodology or criteria (standards) there were public discussions organised either by CAQA, NCHE, CONUS or COHS with representatives of academic community, students and labour market. Valuable discussions on the changes in CAQA's standards and procedures took place at conferences where the academic community discussed some hot issues in HE, such as [TREND](#). For example the first standards were presented at TREND in 2007 and the standard revision in 2017.

### **10.3 ESG 2.3 Implementing processes**

*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.*

#### **CAQA COMPLIANCE**

As explained in [section 4.1](#), CAQA developed external quality assurance processes and procedures (2006) and created a pool of external experts (reviewers) before the start of implementation (2007). [Section 5.1](#) describes the methodological scope of the agency by giving an overview of the evaluation processes (accreditation of study programmes, accreditation of HEIs, initial accreditation and external quality control of HEIs), accompanying documents, procedures, resources and internal QA mechanisms enabling those processes, listed in Table 2. CAQA methodology for implementing all types of external evaluations is described in chapter 6.

Here, we summarise the procedures for evaluation reports and external quality assurance of institutions and programmes, present the results of evaluations and discuss the evolution of these procedures since the previous assessment.

### Summarised description and outcomes of the evaluation processes

Every CAQA evaluation report contains recommendations for improvements and many diverse activities and communications between HEIs and CAQA take place after the evaluation process. A report on external evaluation contains a detailed elaboration of any institutional shortcomings and recommendations for their alleviation. Follow-up activities take place through contacts between CAQA members and HEI representatives to help improve aspects of an HEI and to make a subsequent accreditation more certain. In the case of a conditional decision on accreditation of either an HEI or study programme, the HEI gets an Act of warning which contains comments on the fulfilment of all standards and shortcomings in the fulfilment of some of them. The HEI has up to 6 months to make improvements and respond, during which time it can communicate with the CAQA. CAQA also has a defined follow-up procedure within the process of external quality control as described in [section 6.3](#).

External quality assurance of institutions and programmes is undertaken on a cyclical basis by CAQA: accreditation every 5 years, external quality control in 5-8 years, between 2 accreditation rounds. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used are clearly defined and published in advance. Many briefing activities for HEIs are organized by CAQA to help them prepare documentation for the evaluation process, and these briefings take place about 6 months before the evaluation starts. The processes to be used for all CAQA evaluations are clearly defined and published, as described in chapters 5 and 6. CAQA has completed two rounds of accreditation of all HEIs and their study programmes as well as one round of external quality control between the first and the second accreditation rounds. The third accreditation round started in November 2016. The outcomes of all evaluations done so far are presented in Table 5.



Table 5. Outcomes of CAQA evaluations

<b>First accreditation round 2007 - 2011</b>	
2007*	78 Colleges of professional studies+ 515 Study Programmes
2008*	81 Faculties, Colleges of academic studies, Universities + 928 Study Programmes
2009*	60 Faculties, Colleges of academic studies, Universities + 308 Study Programmes
2010*	13 Faculties, Colleges of academic studies, Universities + 51 Study Programmes
2011*	145 Study Programmes
<b>First external quality control round 2011 - 2015</b>	
2011*	54 Colleges of professional studies
2012	36 Faculties, 6 Colleges of professional studies
2013	7 Universities, 59 Faculties
2014	1 University (1 follow-up), 17 Faculties (3 follow-ups)
2015	7 Faculties (1 follow-up)
<b>Second accreditation round 2012 - 2016</b>	
2012	52 HEIs (2 Faculties, 50 Colleges of professional studies, 14 acts) + 210 Study Programmes (59 acts, 2 rejections)
2013	35 HEIs (2 Universities, 27 Faculties, 1 College of academic studies, 6 Polytechnics, 2 acts) + 494 Study Programmes (67 acts, 6 rejections)
2014	63 HEIs (8 Universities, 52 Faculties, 2 Colleges of academic studies, 1 College of professional studies, 4 acts) + 644 Study Programmes (79 acts, 2 rejections)
2015	40 HEIs (2 Universities, 32 Faculties, 3 College, 3 colleges of professional studies + 366 Study Programmes (68 acts, 37 rejections)
2016	6 HEIs (3 Faculties, 3 Colleges of academic studies, 3 acts) + 250 Study Programmes (141 acts, 57 rejections)
<b>Third accreditation round 2017 -</b>	
2017	13 HEIs (1 Universities, 3 Faculties, 7 Colleges of professional studies, 3 acts) + 151 Study Programmes (65 acts, 9 rejections)
<b>Initial accreditation 2013-</b>	
2013	4 HEIs (1 positive opinions, 3 negative opinions)
2014	9 HEIs (3 positive opinions, 6 negative opinions)
2015	3 HEIs (2 positive opinions, 1 negative opinion)
2016	11 HEIs (3 positive opinions, 8 negative opinions)
2017	2 HEIs (2 positive opinions)
<b>Extraordinary external quality controls requested by the Ministry</b>	
2014	1 College of professional studies
2016	1 College of professional studies
2017	1 College of professional studies, 3 Faculties

\* Evaluations done in the period covered by the previous ENQA evaluation

### Evolution of the evaluation processes

CAQA is constantly responding to changes and challenges in the HE system that bring to light from time to time weaknesses in existing procedures that need to be addressed to ensure the evaluation processes are always fit for purpose. All such circumstances that require changes of procedures are at first discussed at CAQA meetings, then appropriate decisions are made and, finally working groups are created to define the new procedure. Sometimes, as in the case of changes of standards and methodology for doctoral studies, members of NCHE have also been involved. Following these periodic reviews of procedures, CAQA has introduced several **new procedures** as follows:

1. [Follow-up procedure](#) (Annex 9) in the external quality control (audit). Five HEIs have been submitted to this procedure in the process of auditing since 2013 and the reports submitted annually from these HEIs after the completion of the audit, confirm the progress of the HEIs and justify the efforts of the follow-up procedure.
2. Two step procedure in the process of initial accreditation to rationalize the resources as described in [section 6.4](#).
3. New procedure for assessing the academic qualifications that enables establishing the validity of a PhD diplomas and, consequently, the lack of a teacher's competences for fulfilment of standard 9 for accreditation of study programmes and of standard 6 for accreditation of HEIs as described in [section 14.3](#).
4. New methodology for assessing teacher's and mentor's competences for doctoral studies (Annex 7) in science and in arts to improve the quality of teachers at doctoral studies and, consequently, quality of PhD students.

Changes of standards and accompanying guidelines are described in [section 10.5](#).

#### **10.4 ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts**

*External quality assurance should have a professional system of peer review at its core, carried out by groups of experts that include (a) student member(s).*

#### **CAQA COMPLIANCE**

All external evaluations run by CAQA are based on a multi-level peer review analysis of the documentation and site visit. Firstly this is done by external reviewers. Analysis of their reports is done by CAQA members who are members of the relevant sub-commission and who were on the site visit to the HEI together with the student and labour market representatives. Based on reviewers' and site visit reports a final decision is made at the CAQA meeting with participation of all members who could be considered as a core in this peer review system.

CAQA has a pool of 737 reviewers on its [List of reviewers](#) elected after their applications at a CAQA meeting at the suggestion of the sub-commission from the relevant field as explained in [section 5.5](#). They are distributed in different fields as follows:



Social sciences and humanities 26%  
 Technical and technological 43%  
 Medical 8%  
 Natural sciences and Mathematics 13%  
 Arts 14%

The corresponding distribution of number of study programmes of I and II level (jointly) and PhD, respectively is:

Social sciences and humanities 38% and 34%  
 Technical and technological 32% and 30%  
 Medical 7% and 6%  
 Natural sciences and Mathematics 8% and 17%  
 Arts 11% and 8%

CAQA is aware of the present imbalance between the numbers of reviewers in each field of expertise and the number of study programmes in those fields. Thus, the technical and technological fields have the largest pool of reviewers – over 40% of the total reviewer's pool, and significantly more than the number of reviewers in the fields of social sciences and humanities. The number of study programmes in those two fields is, however, very similar. The other fields have an adequate number of reviewers related to the number of their study programmes.

To overcome this imbalance, CAQA has made a strong campaign for recruiting teachers from this field as reviewers, but without success so far. Part of the problem lies in the fact that the payments for reviewers are late, due to the inefficiency of Ministry transactions. This problem will be solved once the Agency is created. For the same reason of unreliability in reviewer payments from the Ministry, although CAQA realises the importance of including international reviewers amongst its database of experts, it cannot engage international reviewers regularly. Occasionally some reviewers from the list of international reviewers who live in Serbia or come to Serbia regularly and who are familiar with the Serbian language are given some PhD programmes to review. The high cost of translation of accreditation documentation by HEIs into English prohibits any extension of international reviewers to non-Serbian speakers.

CAQA has organised many trainings for reviewers (20), especially in the period of the first accreditation round. Later on, when students and labour market representatives were introduced into the evaluations, they have, also, been trained. Although discrepancies between reviewer's reports have been noticeable on occasions during the previous period, unfortunately lack of time and human resources has prevented CAQA from being able to organise training for refreshing its reviewers' skills. Nevertheless, detailed instructions for reviewers together with the forms for reports were made in 2013 and put on the web site <http://www.kapk.org/en/reviewers/> as a measure to alleviate these discrepancies between reviewers' reports. CAQA plans a new series of trainings for reviewers once new procedures, instructions and guidelines for the new revised standards get adopted.

CAQA recently decided and publicised the [Decision](#) to develop a more structured feedback between the external reviewers and CAQA members, by organising annual discussions with reviewers for every scientific/artistic field.

### 10.5 ESG 2.5 Criteria for formal outcomes

*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.*

#### CAQA COMPLIANCE

Here, we summarise the criteria for evaluation processes, present their evolution since the previous assessment, discuss their clarity and the system of decision-making that was the topic elaborated in the ENQA panel report.

#### Standards and their evolution since 2013

CAQA developed the criteria for decisions (firstly in 2006, supplemented several times since 2008, and thoroughly revised in 2017) in the form of 7 sets of standards with a number of quality indicators within each standard, as well as accompanying rules and regulations on accreditation/external quality control standards and procedures, guidelines and instructions for reviewers and for HEIs, all presented in [section 4.3](#). All standards, rules and regulations are published in the book “Accreditation and external quality control in higher education” and publicised on the web-site ([www.kapk.org](http://www.kapk.org)).

In addition to the new procedures described in [section 10.3](#), in the period 2013-2017 CAQA has introduced or prepared for introduction in the evaluation process **new standards and guidelines** (with a particular objectives) as follows:

1. [Standards for initial accreditation](#) of HEIs and study programmes (Annex 8) to precisely and comprehensively define the conditions for the foundation of new HEIs and to respond to the increasing number of such requests.
2. To alleviate plagiarism, in the [Standards for accreditation of doctoral study programmes](#) (Annex 7): standard 12 *Transparency* was added. The objective of this amendment was to follow the changes in the LoHE and respond to the situation in the academic community when several cases of plagiarism in doctoral dissertations were revealed in 2014.
3. To increase the number of vocational experts following changes of LoHE in 2015, accreditation of a new type of study programme of the second level (Annex 6) – professional master programme was introduced by changes of [Standards for accreditation study programmes of the I and II level](#) in 2016.
4. To improve the whole system of QA to fit the purpose after 12 years of implementing the old standards and to harmonize with the new ESG revised in 2015, standards were revised in 2016-2017. The objectives are presented in [section 14.1](#). Revised standards have been submitted to the public debate and adopted by NCHE in April 2017 are still waiting for publication in the Official Gazette.

CAQA has also checked whether its standards and Guidelines are clearly and precisely explained and understood by reviewers and HEIs through the analysis of the answers to question 4 (*Are the standards, guidelines and recommendations of CAQA clear and understandable?*) of the questionnaire given to HEIs and reviewers. The distribution of answers within the sample of 145 HEIs and 118 reviewers from the questionnaire given in 2017 illustrates their satisfaction as presented in figures 5 and 6.

Fig 5. Distribution of answers to question 4 in the sample of HEIs

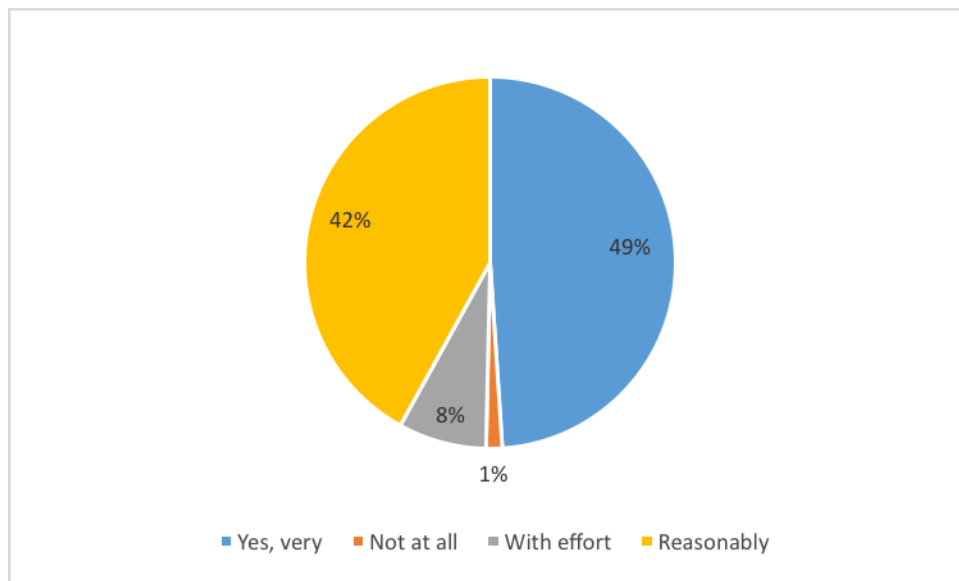
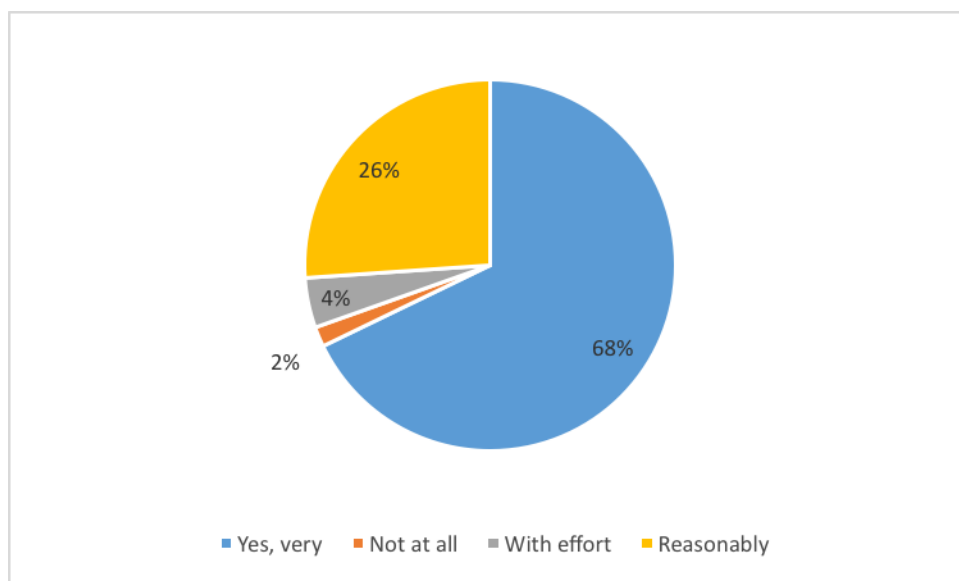


Fig 6. Distribution of answers to question 4 in the sample of reviewers



### Decision making process

Regarding changes in the whole decision making procedure, as suggested by the ENQA panel in 2012, this was not possible as article 13 of the [LoHE](#) defines the responsibilities and tasks of CAQA and also states that the reviewers should not be publicised. Therefore the involvement of reviewers was restricted to analysis of the accreditation documentation. After that, CAQA members from the relevant field analyse reviewers' reports and prepare the report for the CAQA meeting and also prepare the Reports on accreditation, Act of warning or Report on rejections. Similarly, a CAQA member prepares the Report on audit. However, the CAQA office has an officer for technical preparation of reports which helps to some extent to decrease the work load for CAQA members.

The double role of CAQA members to take an active part in all aspects of the evaluation process (site visit, analysis of reviewer's report, analysis of documentation, preparation of reports) and to take part in the decision-making process is defined by the LoHE and [Rules and regulations of CAQA's activities](#) as explained in [section 4.5.1](#).

For the revision of the whole decision-making procedure, and more appropriate division of the labour between CAQA members and external reviewers, the necessary change of the LoHE is needed, followed by the regulations of responsibilities, tasks of all participants in the decision-making procedure within the new Agency's Statute. We shall try to ensure that the new Agency will have more than 8 administrative staff and that more officers will also take part in the preparation of the reports.

### **10.6 ESG 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.*

### CAQA COMPLIANCE

All types of evaluation reports that CAQA produces are structured to cover description, analysis (including relevant evidence), and recommendations but they differ to some extent regarding the process, as described in detail in chapter 6.

The evaluation report for external quality control of an HEI is structured in the same way as the self-evaluation report. It consists of a resume for each evaluation subject, as well as clearly-stated recommendations.

The evaluation report for the purpose of accreditation of an HEI is a part of the Decision on accreditation/acts of warning/rejection. Its structure follows the [Standards for accreditation of HEIs](#) (standards 1-13). The structure of the decision on accreditation/rejection of the study programme follows [Standards of accreditation of study programmes](#) (standards 1-12) for I and II level and [Standards for accreditation of doctoral studies](#) (standards 1-12).

[Reports on external quality control of HEIs](#) and [Accreditation decisions](#) are published on the web site. A list of accredited HEIs and study programmes is also published on the web site as a [Guide for students](#).

Improvements have been made in the reporting process since 2014 by unifying the reports and also by introducing quantitative data on a study programme or HEI in reports.

### **10.7 ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals**

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

#### **CAQA COMPLIANCE**

The appeal procedure is defined by the [LoHE](#), article 16 and by the Rules and regulations provided by NCHE and published on its web site as described in chapter 6. Appeals are submitted to the NCHE and then sent back to CAQA for the opinion. Final decision is made by NCHE and it can either confirm or cancel CAQA decision on rejection, or send it back to CAQA for reconsidering the decision. The percentage of CAQA's decisions cancelled by NCHE related to the total number of CAQA decisions is only a few percent. For example in 2016, CAQA has brought 256 accreditation decisions of which NCHE cancelled 11 (4%).

In spite of the relatively small impact of NCHE on CAQA's decisions, efforts are being made to introduce changes in the appeal procedure in the new LoHE by creating an Appeal Body according to the recommendations of ENQA evaluation panel in 2012. The ENQA panel stated in the recommendations to CAQA's fulfilment of ESG standard Independence that "it would be procedurally better to establish a separate Appeals Body". CAQA responded to this recommendation by suggesting a new Article of the LoHE in the public discussion of the draft LoHE in May 2017 which was publicized on the web site. CAQA suggested formation of a separate body of professionals in QA who would be elected in a similar way to CAQA members (on the recommendation of CONUS and COHS) either by the Agency or NCHE. This suggestion had the following objectives:

- a) to establish a body with the highest possible level of professionalism which could competently judge CAQA's decisions,
- b) to make the procedure more independent of both, CAQA or NCHE
- c) to make the procedure more transparent

In the last version of the LoHE draft that CAQA had an insight into, it is foreseen that NCHE forms the Appeal body from a pool of experts/reviewers. This, if adopted, would mean partial acceptance of CAQA's suggestions and improvement of the Appeal procedure.

## 11. Information and Opinion of Stakeholders

In this chapter the results of three questionnaires are presented. Stakeholders were surveyed three times: 2011, 2015, and 2017. On all three occasions representatives of higher educational institutions were surveyed. Students were surveyed in 2011 and 2015, while reviewers were surveyed in 2017, with the goal to analyze accreditation system from different perspectives. A detailed analysis of survey in 2011 was presented in the CAQA Self-evaluation report 2012, Comparative analysis of surveys in [2011 and 2015](#) and in [2017](#) are available on CAQA's web-site.

The questionnaire for 2017 compiled the answers received by 145 representatives of HE institutions and 118 reviewers. The survey was conducted in the first half of 2017 in the form of an e-mail survey (EMS). A detailed analysis is on the web site. Here we present the answers to 10 important questions from the survey for all 3 occasions.

*Question 1: Are the recommendations and decisions of CAQA independent from external influence?*

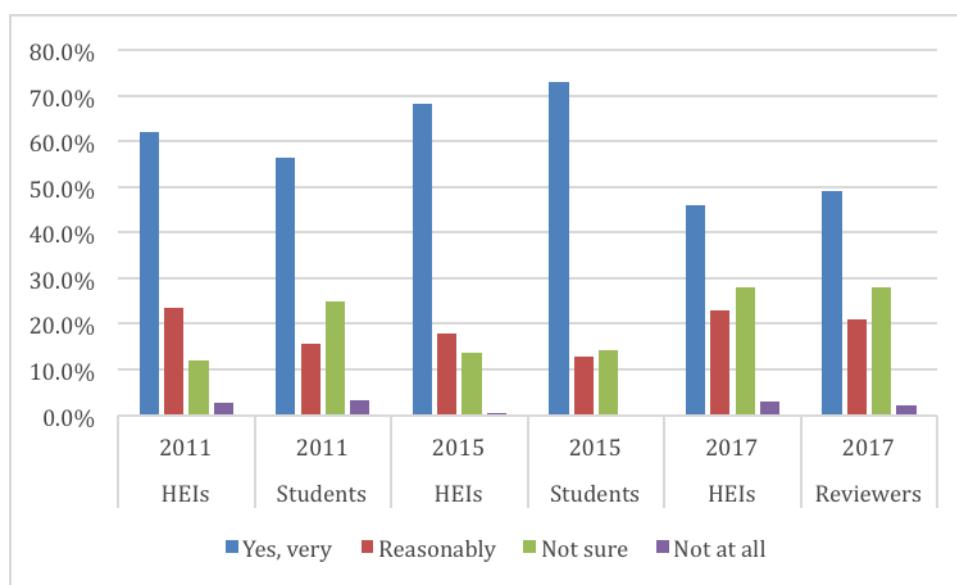


Figure 7. Comparison of stakeholder answers to question 1 across three surveys

*Question 2: To what degree does the CAQA organize and carry out the accreditation process in an effective and efficient manner?*

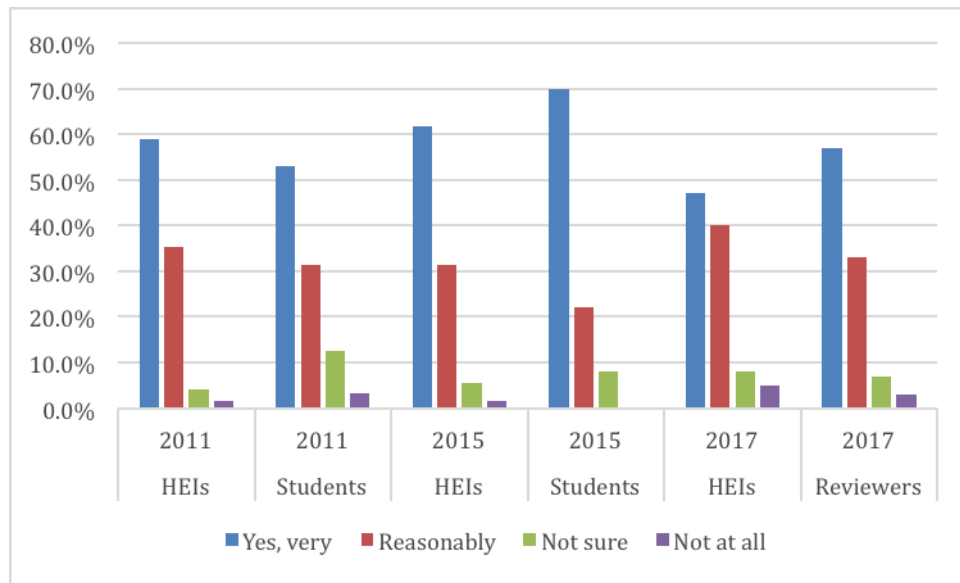


Figure 8. Comparison of stakeholder answers to question 2 across three surveys

*Question 3: To what degree does CAQA consistently apply standards and guidelines?*

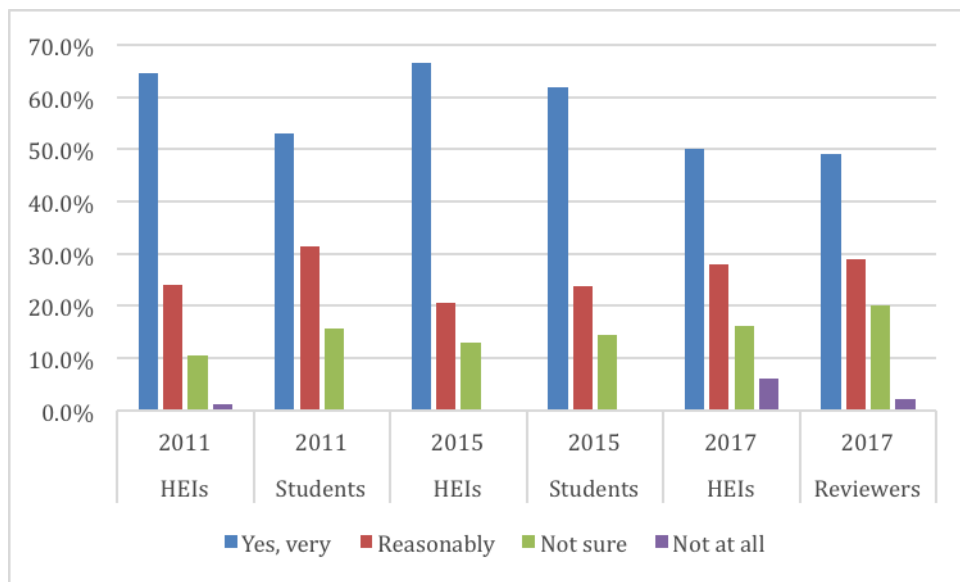


Figure 9. Comparison of stakeholder answers to question 3 across three surveys

*Question 4: Are the standards, guidelines and recommendations of CAQA clear and understandable?*

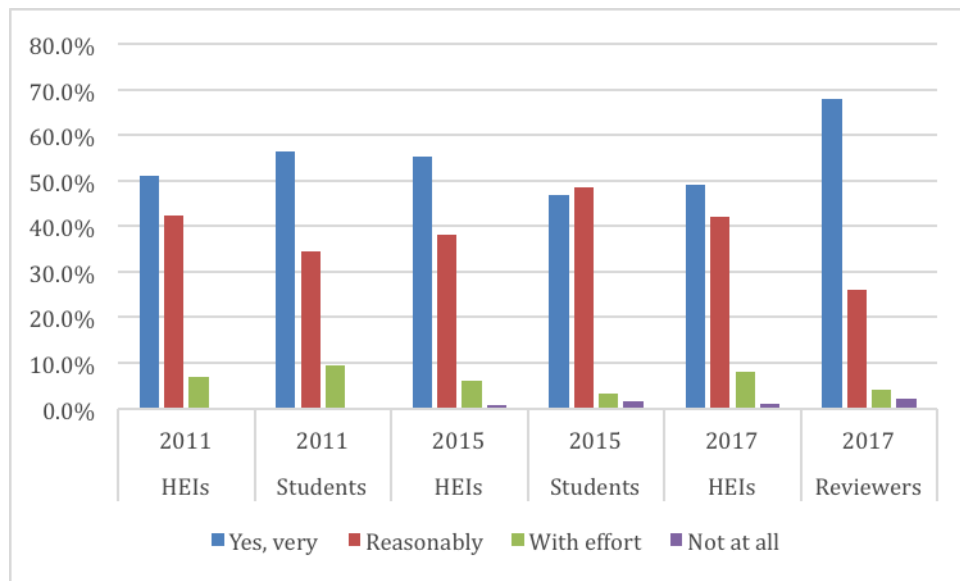


Figure 10. Comparison of stakeholder answers to question 4 across three surveys

*Question 5: Is it easy to provide all necessary data and information required by standards and guidelines?*

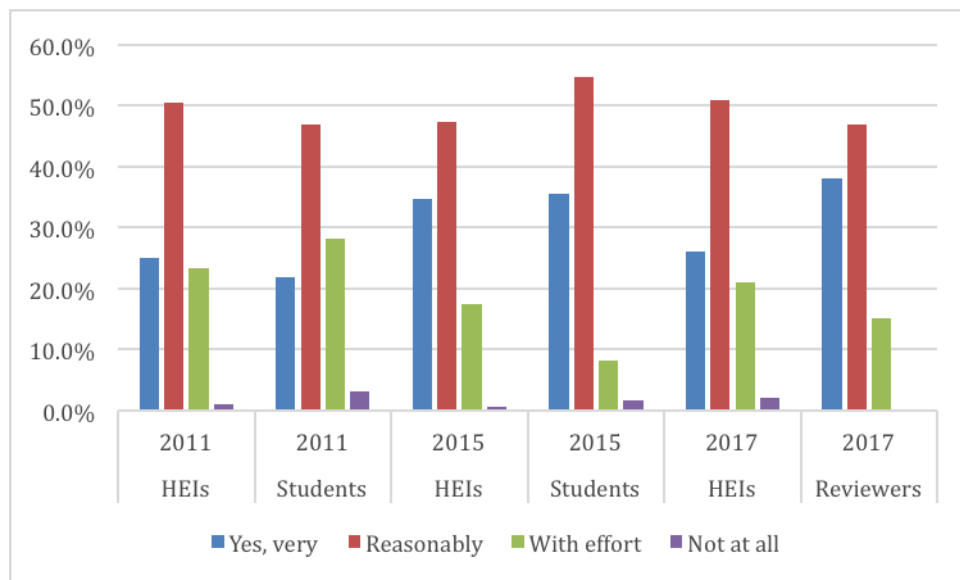


Figure 11. Comparison of stakeholder answers to question 5 across three surveys



*Question 6: Are CAQA criteria relevant for quality evaluation of your institution?*

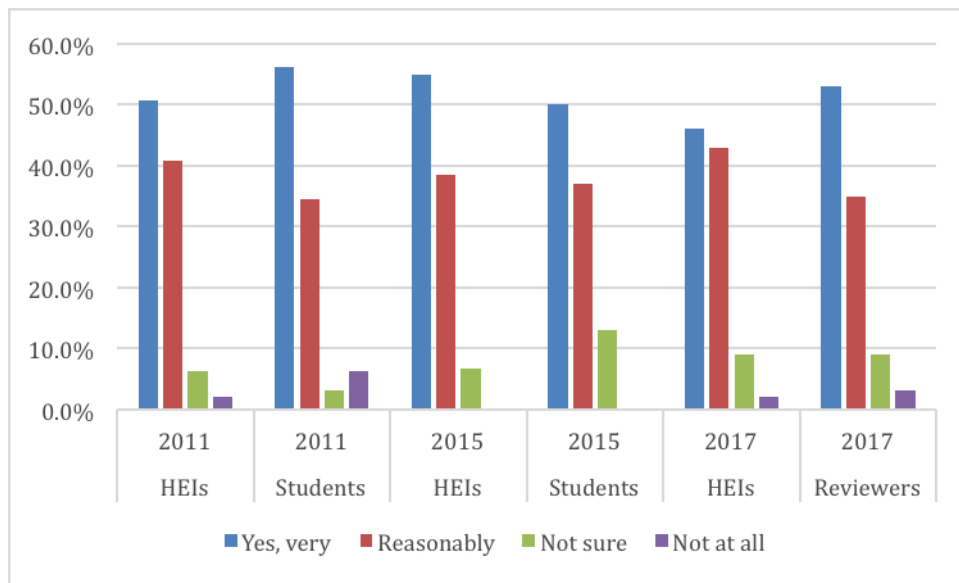


Figure 12. Comparison of stakeholder answers to question 6 across three surveys

*Question 7: Are CAQA criteria relevant for quality evaluation of your study programs?*

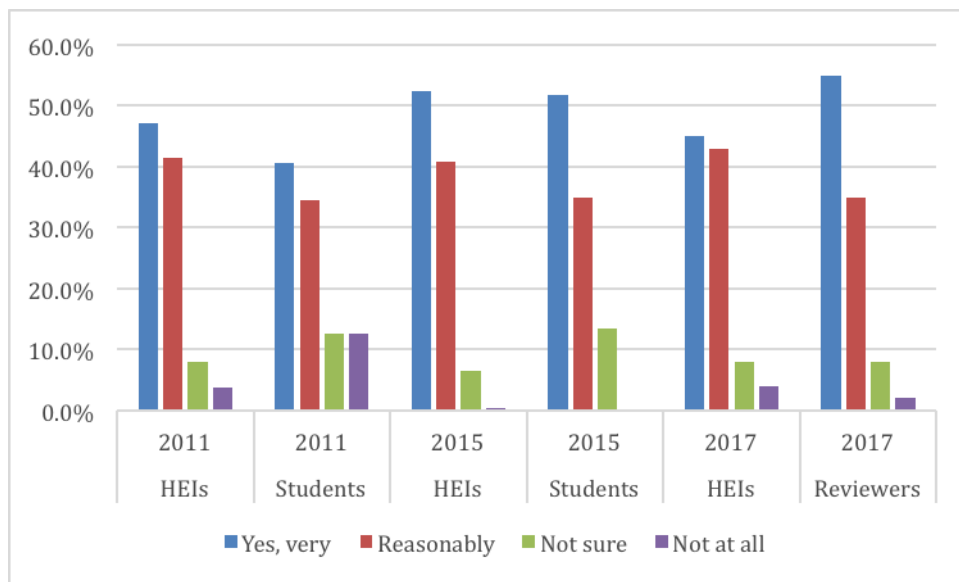


Figure 13. Comparison of stakeholder answers to the question 7 across three surveys

*Question 8: To what degree does the accreditation process contribute to improving the quality of study programmes?*

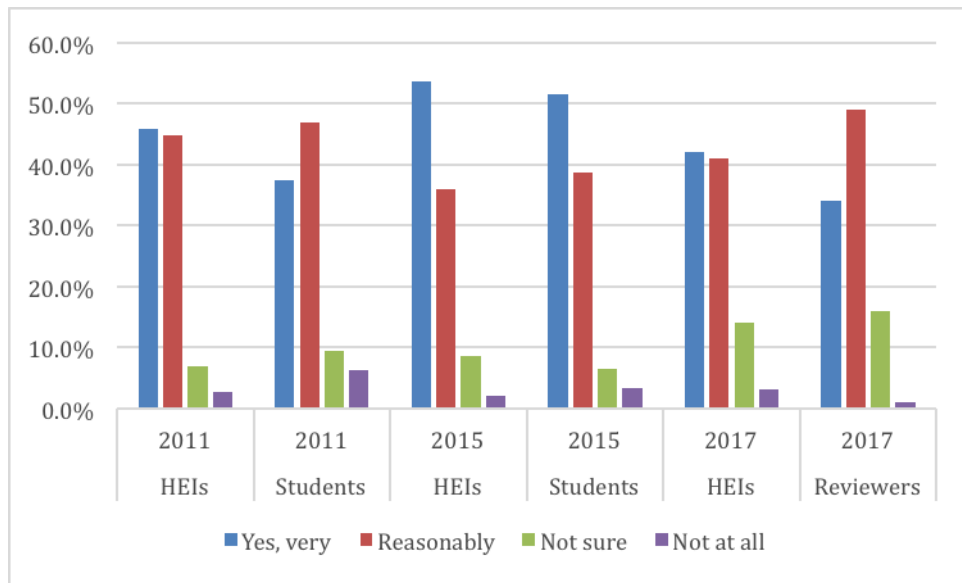


Figure 14. Comparison of stakeholder answers to question 8 across three surveys

*Question 9: How much does accreditation process support innovativeness?*

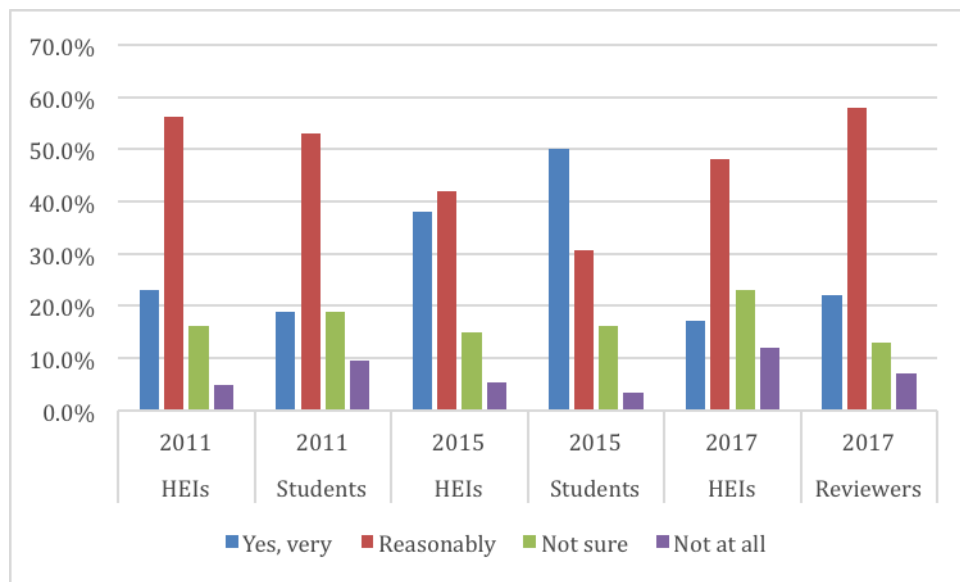


Figure 15. Comparison of stakeholder answers to question 9 across three surveys

*Question 10: How would you rate the professionalism, competence and ethics of the CAQA members?*



Figure 16. Comparison of stakeholder answers to question 10 across three surveys

The general conclusion is that all the participants have positive opinion about the accreditation process, CAQA criteria, recommendations and decisions, as well as about the CAQA members work. No participant was fundamentally opposing the idea of accreditation and external quality control.

Generally, the whole process of external QA was considered as very extensive and demanding a large workload, but both: the processes and the outcomes were considered as very worthwhile the effort.

## 12. Recommendations and main findings from the previous review and agency's resulting follow-up

### 12.1 ESG 2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures

*External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.*

Insert from the review panel report:

#### **(b) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

#### **(c) Recommendation**

CAQA has undoubtedly influenced the awareness regarding the importance of both external and internal quality assurance within the higher education institutions. Hence for the future the external review Panel recommends that CAQA gives support to higher education institutions in their efforts to fully implement the internal quality assurance processes for their own sake, and not just in anticipation of the external quality assurance. Next, CAQA's work should focus strongly on the fact that the institutions themselves have the primary responsibility for the quality of their study programmes and the related actions. Once the institutions have established their sustainable internal quality assurance processes, this should finally lead into a creation of a quality culture within the institutions. One consequence would be that external quality assurance could change from a quality control to quality enhancement. This development would undoubtedly lead into less intensive and less formalized processes by CAQA towards its relations with the institutions.

CAQA actions undertaken:

CAQA is aware of the importance of the establishing of the internal quality assurance process within HEIs and has put much effort into various interactions with them – at the meetings held in the CAQA office, during seminars preceding every cycle of accreditation, during site visits for the purpose of institutional accreditation and for auditing that was done between 2 cycles of accreditation. Auditing was the major instrument for evaluating the extent of development of internal mechanisms for QA within HEIs.

CAQA has analysed the improvement of the internal QA within HEIs in one of the thematic analysis ([Impact of the evaluation process on HEIs in Serbia](#)) and concluded that improvements have been made in the development of the quality culture within HEIs in the second cycle of accreditation in comparison with the first.

CAQA's work in future will focus even more on the development of internal QA within HEIs and gradually change from accreditation to auditing only. A step in this direction is the fact that in the new law a longer accreditation period is suggested (7 years) and a shorter auditing period (4 years), including self-evaluation every 3 years.

## 12.2 ESG 2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes

*The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.*

Insert from the review panel report:

### **(b) Conclusion**

Substantially compliant

### **(c) Recommendation**

For the future revision of quality assurance processes CAQA should focus on stronger stakeholder involvement beyond the well-addressed academic community. Up to now there is no routine engagement of representatives from the labour market, professional bodies, and the like. The external review Panel observed that the various sets of standards, rules and regulations provide a valuable basis for CAQA's work. However, for reasons of further clarity and comprehensibility it might be worth considering a revision of these documents, also based on the experience gained so far.

CAQA actions undertaken:

Regarding the engagement of representatives from the labour market the CAQA has done this routinely in the second cycle of the accreditation - they have been involved as a members of the team for site visits. Regarding refreshing the standards and guidelines, this is now underway since revision of standards has just been completed and new guidelines are in the course of preparation.

## 12.3 ESG 2.3 Criteria for decisions

*Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.*

Insert from the review panel report:

### **(b) Conclusion**

Substantially compliant

### **(c) Recommendation**

As already mentioned above, the decision making process is rather complex and produces numerous reports by various groups of people before everything is consolidated into one final document for a decision.

Regarding the future the external review Panel would recommend a revision of the whole decision making procedure. Even though the Panel learnt that in the end the decisions are clear and consistent, the Panel would recommend a stronger division of labour between the external reviewers and CAQA members and CAQA itself. Especially the double role and the double involvement of CAQA members (in Sub-commissions) in both the external quality assurance and in the final decision-making process calls for a clear separation of the two tasks.

Concerning the decision-making process as it is defined at present, the Panel would recommend an implementation of a more structured feedback between the external reviewers and the CAQA members. The external reviewers interviewed indicated that a structured feedback process would help to improve the whole process. First and foremost, it would bring clarifications especially to those cases where CAQA's decisions did not follow the assessment of the external reviewers.

CAQA actions undertaken:

All CAQA procedures are based upon the LoHE and until it undergoes substantial changes we have to adhere to the present practice on the decision making process and the feedback with the reviewers. The list of reviewers is continuously being updated and a decrease of discrepancies among reviewers' and CAQA members' reports are observed. Double involvement of CAQA members could be significantly changed once the agency is formed by the new LoHE.

#### **12.4 ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose**

*All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.*

Insert from the review panel report:

##### **(b) Conclusion**

Substantially compliant

##### **(c) Recommendation**

The external review Panel recommends limiting the roles of CAQA members to decision making. In other words, they should not be involved in Sub-commissions and other procedural activities. This would free them to focus on planning and strategic monitoring, as well as the further development of CAQA's own procedures, in cooperation with higher education institutions (Cf. recommendations ESG 2.1).

CAQA actions undertaken:

The answer to this recommendation has been largely covered in the previous segments of this chapter. The new LoHE should improve CAQA tasks and commitments according to the recommendations of ENQA and CAQA's experiences in the evaluation process. A draft of the new LoHE was recently released for public discussion and CAQA members took an active role in suggesting changes according to the recommendations of ENQA external review Panel.

#### **12.5 ESG 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.*

Insert from the review panel report:

##### **(b) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

##### **(c) Recommendation**

In order to support a sustainable development of the Serbian higher education, and to strengthen the overall transparency of the work by CAQA, a policy of open publication of the full reports should be continued. This would avoid or at least counter the possibility of a distorted perception by the general public, and (sometimes) even media attacks on CAQA's decisions and overall work that has happened in the past.

CAQA actions undertaken:

CAQA is publishing the reports of all evaluations on its website in 2 formats - as a list of accredited programmes and institutions in a document called [Guide for students](#) and in the integral form as [Accreditation decisions](#) on its web site.

### **12.6 ESG 2.6 Follow-up procedures**

*Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.*

Insert from the review panel report:

**(b) Conclusion**

Partially compliant

**(c) Recommendation**

CAQA is advised to develop more structured and systematic follow-up procedures. The follow-up should focus on whether CAQA's recommendations are dealt with appropriately and the required action plans are properly prepared and implemented by the institutions and/or by the study programmes, or not.

CAQA actions undertaken:

CAQA has developed a new structured follow-up procedure in the auditing process as explained in [section 5.1.2](#). and [section 6.3](#). The process of accreditation involves act of warning that could be considered as a way of follow-up.

### **12.7 ESG 2.7 Periodic reviews**

*External quality assurance 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.*

Insert from the review panel report:

**(b) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

**(c) Recommendation**

The external review Panel expressed its concern about the unbalanced workload of CAQA and its members at large. It would be advisable to focus on the human resource development within CAQA and its office staff to guarantee efficient support for the overall processes. Due to the heavy workload CAQA members now have to obtain (technical) assistance from external staff (employed by temporary contracts) for first checks of documents and to support in writing of the reports. It is important that CAQA has a permanent and trained and skilful office staff to support it in all its activities.

CAQA actions undertaken:

As stated before, the workload of CAQA's members will decrease once it undergoes transformation to an agency by the new LoHE. Agency will have permanent staff, trained and skilled to support all activities. The staff employed by CAQA in the present CAQA office has not significantly changed since the last review: they are well skilled which contributes to the overall efficacy of CAQA's activities. The major change is the employment of the new officer for technical assistance in preparation of sub-commission reports who replaced external staff employed by temporary contracts.

## 12.8 ESG 2.8 System-wide analyses

*Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.*

Insert from the review panel report:

### **(b) Conclusion**

Non-Compliant

### **(c) Recommendation**

The external review Panel observed that CAQA has already decided to implement a strategic system-wide analysis in the near future.<sup>26</sup> This decision is timely and it is strongly supported by the external review Panel. In this context it is also recommended that CAQA office staff should be able to provide appropriate support to this activity. Thus it is advisable that CAQA is willing to review and take steps to improve the human resources capacity and competencies of its academic staff so that it is capable of supporting and fulfilling the whole scale of tasks assigned to it.

CAQA actions undertaken:

Since the last review CAQA has published 3 system-wide analyses (on HEI units, on HSPS, on HEIs in the field of medicine) and 8 thematic analyses, all on the web site (<http://www.kapk.org/en/caqa/>). CAQA's members actively participate in various meetings and always present analysis of some aspect of their work. Some of these analyses had a certain impact on the decision makers. One example was the NCHE decision on temporary cease of applications for HEI units in July 2016 as explained in chapter 9.4.

## 12.9 ESG 3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education

*The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.*

Insert from the review panel report:

### **(b) Conclusion**

Substantially compliant

### **(c) Recommendation**

No specific recommendations are given. The external review Panel provided comments and recommendations in the previous chapter dealing with ESG Part 2.

CAQA actions undertaken on this ESG standard are given under ESG Part 2.



### **12.10 ESG 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 quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.*

Insert from the review panel report:

**(b) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

**(c) Recommendation**

No specific recommendations.

Although CAQA is formally recognised by competent public authorities in the country and in EHEA, CAQA has put lot of effort to improve its legal status as well as the level of independence from the Ministry since the previous evaluation by suggesting changes of LoHE and by contributing to the creation of an Agency as explained in [section 14.2](#).

### **12.11 ESG 3.3 Activities**

*Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.*

Insert from the review panel report:

**(b) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

**(c) Recommendation**

No specific recommendations.

Since the previous evaluation CAQA continued to undertake the same external quality assurance activities at institutional and programme level and, also started the new evaluation process: initial accreditation.

### 12.12 ESG 3.4 Resources

*Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.*

Insert from the review panel report:

**(b) Conclusion**

Partially compliant

**(c) Recommendation**

Even though CAQA argues in its SER that adequate resources – in terms of human, financial and infrastructural – are in place in order to run the external quality assurance procedures in an effective and efficient manner, the Panel is of the opinion that one of the most demanding challenges for the future of CAQA is to focus on sustainable human resource development. Yet, certain outlines for a stronger commitment in staff training and professionalism are presented in the 'Action plan for CAQA improvements', and this very issue was also discussed during the interview sessions.

The Panel would strongly encourage CAQA to set up concrete steps and actions towards a sustainable strategy concerning its human resource development.

A constant enhancement of qualifications and professionalism of the CAQA staff in terms of quality assurance knowledge and management at large are of utmost importance. CAQA should encourage the participation of the staff members in training, and specific training events and seminars on national but also on international level.

Aside from providing administrative support to CAQA members, staff members, when appropriate, should also be involved in CAQA's strategic or methodological discussions.

The outlines are already set in the 'Action plan for CAQA improvements', and hence CAQA should safeguard that human resource development has a high priority, and CAQA members find the appropriate time and resources to shift their focus on the strategic element of the whole organization.

Nevertheless Panel took note of the good impact on the quality development within the Serbian higher education, due also because of the strong commitment of CAQA and its members towards external quality assurance.

CAQA actions undertaken:

CAQA's office has not undergone substantial changes since the last review as explained in details in [section 4.5](#) and [section 9.5](#). The major change is the appointment of an officer for technical preparation of the reports. The officers were included in various analytical activities and participated to several conferences. They have also put a lot of effort to renew the data base and to create a new website. In that respect we are now independent of the agency engaged by the Ministry for this job. The effort that CAQA has put in the improvement of its resources since the previous evaluation is explained in [section 9.5](#).

### 12.13 ESG 3.5 Mission

*Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.*

Insert from the review panel report:

**(b) Conclusion**

Partially compliant

**(c) Recommendation**

It is strongly advisable that CAQA's mission statement is translated into long term strategic plans (every 3-5 years) with more detailed actions plan agreed each year to ensure its implementation, including the necessary feedbacks from possible changes in CAQA's functional environment. The mission statement might also include the range of responsibilities and a clear statement on the working principles of CAQA. With regard to the manifold responsibilities, CAQA has the commitment to fulfil these responsibilities in line with the defined aims and objectives based on defined working principles.

Once CAQA has adopted a strategic focus it might also be possible in a foreseeable future to rethink the composition of the Commission as it is now. The Panel recommends giving serious consideration to adding nominees of the Student conferences and representatives from the labour market to the Commission. Nevertheless a final decision on the inclusion of this expertise in CAQA's governance is not made yet, because of legal constraints. Once the legal frameworks are changed CAQA is allowed to include the students and other outside stakeholders.

CAQA actions undertaken:

CAQA was trying to fulfil its mission statement under the present circumstances. Students and labour market representatives were involved in the evaluation process since 2013. Involvement of students in the evaluation process was suggested by both, CAQA and NCHE, in the public debate for the new Law. We hope it will be excepted by the Ministry.

### 12.14 ESG 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 higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.*

Insert from the review panel report:

**(b) Conclusion**

Substantially compliant

**(c) Recommendation**

The external review Panel would advise that the independence of CAQA in procedural matters is more clearly stated and supported in the legal documents and that CAQA's relation and its role as an independent body towards NCHE is clarified. Particularly, it would be advisable that NCHE is not the body responsible for both establishing CAQA and serving as an appeal to CAQA's decisions. It would be procedurally better to establish a separate Appeals Body.

CAQA actions undertaken:

CAQA has continued to function on an operationally independent manner described in [chapter 6](#) and [section 9.3](#). CAQA has suggested a change of the appeal procedure in the draft of the new law by formation of a professional Appeal Body in the document [System of QA in LoHE draft-analysis of its compliance with ESG](#) which is published on CAQA's web-site.

### **12.15 ESG 3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies**

*The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be predefined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:*

*a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process; an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency; 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 quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.*

Insert from the review panel report:

**(b) Conclusion**

Substantially compliant

**(c) Recommendation**

The external review Panel recommends continuing the policy of publication of the full reports, starting with the upcoming re-accreditation cycle. The Panel would advise CAQA also to develop a structured and systematic follow-up procedure. The Panel recommends that CAQA focus on stronger stakeholder involvement from the labour market. The engagement of representatives from the labour market, professional bodies should become routine.

CAQA actions undertaken:

CAQA is publishing full reports since the previous reaccreditation cycle. Structured and systematic follow-up procedure has been developed within the rules and [Standards for external quality control](#) (audit) and implemented with reports published on the web-site. The engagement of representatives from the labour market is introduced.

### **12.16 ESG 3.8 Accountability procedures**

*Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.*

Insert from the review panel report:

**(b) Conclusion**

Partially compliant

**(c) Recommendation**

In order to secure its long-term development and viability, CAQA should devote proper time and human resources to deal with the issues under ESG 3.8. As already noted above, this should not only involve the CAQA members but the entire staff and the expertise it can provide, including e.g. financial prospects.

CAQA actions undertaken:

CAQA has continued to operate in a similar way as in the period before the previous report with the same office staff. The changes are expected in the period to come when the new agency is formed that will enable the improvement of all resources. We hope that the present staff will stay and hopefully new staff will be appointed what will contribute to the better job distribution and the decrease of the workload of CAQA members who will stay as the decision making body.

### 13. SWOT analysis

In order to understand our strengths and weaknesses, and to identify opportunities open to CAQA and the threats that CAQA faces, we have conducted a SWOT analysis. On the basis of SWOT framework, CAQA will be able to develop the strategy for the future challenges. The CAQA intends to alleviate and remove the threats and weak points from the SWOT analysis, especially those that can be tackled immediately. The CAQA intends to improve and further advance its strong points (strengths) and to make good use of the present opportunities. This SWOT analysis is realistic, impartial and transparent. It was developed by CAQA members through brainstorming method, finding its starting point in the SWOT analysis from previous [Self Evaluation Report \(2012\)](#).

The SWOT analysis assessed the following elements and aspects of CAQA work: actions, official status, resources, mission, independence, criteria and procedures of external quality assurance used by the CAQA, and modes of work and responsibilities.

#### STRENGTHS

1. Competences, professionalism, and accountability of the CAQA members
2. Accumulated experience of CAQA members since its establishment in 2006
3. Standards and procedures for both internal and external evaluation in HE according to ESG
4. Dedication of CAQA members to quality improvement in HE
5. Large pool of trained reviewers including international experts
6. Independence of the CAQA in its decision-making
7. Involvement of students and other stakeholders in CAQA activities
8. Activities related to continual improvement of quality assurance procedures and standards
9. Advisory and educational role of the CAQA
10. Good cooperation with HEIs
11. Close cooperation with other QA agencies at regional level
12. Improved cooperation with international QA associations and QA agencies across Europe
13. Significant number of trained and selected reviewers, both among professors and students
14. Competences, professionalism, and accountability of administrative staff
15. Adequate space and infrastructure in the CAQA office

## WEAKNESSES

1. An insufficient number of administrative staff
2. Excess workload of CAQA members
3. Insufficient involvement of international experts and reviewers in the accreditation and external evaluation of HEIs
4. Number of reviewers in some fields not adequately distributed
5. Insufficient number of CAQA members in some fields
6. The criteria of reviewers is not consistent in all cases
7. A distorted perception of CAQA in the general public due to strong media attacks by individuals unsatisfied with CAQA decisions
8. No systematic research of the effects of the accreditation process and external quality control on the quality and efficacy of studying (data collected)
9. Inadequate appeal procedure

***Measures for alleviating W1 and W2:*** Increase of the number of administrative staff trained for particular activities such as writing the reports, including administrative staff members in international activities by their participation in conferences and workshops and visits to other European agencies. Change of law by which the formation of the agency is predicted will alleviate these weaknesses.

***Time scale:*** 1-3 years

***Measures for alleviating W3, W4 and W5:*** Campaign for introducing new reviewers from our academic community, organising their trainings, call for international experts, regular payments. Change of law by which the formation of the agency is predicted will also alleviate these weaknesses.

***Time scale:*** 1-3 years

***Measures for alleviating W6:*** CAQA plans to organise seminars for reviewers to introduce new revised standards. This will be opportunity to increase their competences and achieve the satisfactory level of consistency. CAQA have decided to publish all its reports and through transparency to achieve acceptable level of consistency among reviewers.

***Time scale:*** 1 year

***Measures for alleviating W7:*** Through periodical and internal assessment of the quality of its work, transparent accreditation reports, organisation of press conferences, interviews to media, introduction of PR officer CAQA will be able to face this challenge.

***Time scale:*** 1-3 years

***Measures for alleviating W8:*** CAQA has decided to do a systematic research of the effects of the accreditation process and external quality control on the quality and efficacy of studying by using data collected in accreditation process with the help of trained officers.

***Time scale:*** 1-2 years

**Measures for alleviating W9:** CAQA is trying to influence changes of the new draft Law to introduce an Appeal Body. Changes of the Law would alleviate these weaknesses.

**Time scale:** 1 year

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Transformation of CAQA in the agency by the new Law on higher education
2. Development of National Qualification Framework in Serbia
3. Wider support in the general public through dissemination activities
4. Increasing the awareness of students regarding their role as partners in HE
5. Support of the government institutions
6. Increasing involvement of employers in the redefinition of learning outcomes and competences
7. Development of internal quality control within HEIs
8. Exploitation of the privileges associated with the candidate-status for EU membership
9. Good international cooperation with other QA agencies on bilateral level and through ENQA membership
10. Possible participation in ERASMUS+ projects
11. Creating a regional pool of reviewers

## **THREATS**

1. Articles of the draft LoHE that enable influence of the Ministry on bodies involved in QA
2. A long-standing unfavourable economic situation in Serbia
3. Low interest of employers regarding their participation in the processes of revision of the curricula and learning outcomes
4. Small academic community within the country (personal contacts, a higher probability of conflicts of interest)
5. Presence of corruption in different areas of society
6. Lack of harmonization of study programmes at the level of professional associations and HEIs in the same scientific field, in view of a minimum common structure and learning outcomes
7. Lack of benchmark statements within all scientific/artistic areas at the European level
8. Current very strong motivation of HEIs (caused by inadequate financing – per number of students) to increase the number of study programmes and number of students resulting in the decrease of quality of HE
9. Insufficient efficacy of the MoES financial administration of CAQA budget line resulting in problems for CAQA's activities
10. Relations with NCHE regarding appeal procedures

The SWOT analysis presented here is an overview of all strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities regarding CAQA, having in mind the current situation at the level of EHEA and at the national level, especially when it comes to introducing the new Law on Higher Education and National Qualification Framework.

Comparison of this SWOT analysis with the previous one, shows that a number of weaknesses and threats are still present. Due to inadequate financial management and because of the status quo at all levels while waiting for the new LoHE, CAQA did not have enough capacities to tackle all the existing challenges. The major part of CAQA activities were oriented towards maintaining its current position until new regulations come into force.

CAQA will continue with careful and continuous monitoring of all significant factors in the area of higher education, with the goal to overcome identified weaknesses and threats and to take advantage of its strengths.



## 14. Current challenges and areas for future development

### *14.1. Activities and accompanying challenges in relation to the standard revision*

CAQA has actively participated in the revision of standards. The process started in April 2016 when a working group created by CAQA started to work on revisions. The first draft of revised standards was submitted to NCHE in September 2016 and after a discussion at NCHE, the working group was enlarged by members of NCHE and the draft was adopted in October 2016. After a public discussion, standards were finally adopted in April 2017. Standards will be sent to the Official Gazette for publishing after technical revision.

During the revision, CAQA had in mind the continuity of the quality assurance (QA) process in Serbia, and the existing standards were the starting point. The basic structure of the whole system of standards, rules and regulations was kept in the initial form because this is directed by the LoHE, because it has received international recognition, and because guidelines and procedures have been developed and implemented 12 years and the academic community has adopted their QA practices accordingly. However, a revision was necessary for 3 major reasons. The first reason was harmonization with changes of the LoHE. The second reason was harmonization with the recent changes of ESG. The third reason for the revision of standards arose from the 11-year experience of their implementation in two cycles of accreditation.

CAQA is now in the process of updating Guidelines to match the new standards. We also plan to modernise the documentation and reviewer's forms and then to organise seminars for HEI representatives and reviewers. These activities will take place over a period of a few months starting in autumn 2017.

### *14.2. Activities and accompanying challenges in relation to the new Law on higher education*

CAQA has participated very actively in the activities of the working group considering changes of the LoHE formed by the former minister during 2015. After changes in the Government and in the Ministry in 2016, this work was abandoned and a new group was formed in 2016 to draft the new LoHE. According to this law, a new agency as an independent legal entity is proposed.

CAQA made detailed analysis of the Articles in the new LoHE draft related to QA with recommendations for changes during the recently-completed public debate of the new Law in the light of its compliance with ESG and presented the document to the Ministry as a contribution to the debate. The major point in this analysis (published on the CAQA website) was to follow the recommendations suggested in the ENQA evaluation report and in the ENQA board decision on CAQA's membership. The second point was to maintain good provisions of the present law. The third important suggestion made in this document was the creation of an appeal body as suggested by ENQA. This analysis was taken into account by NCHE in their discussions of the draft law and all suggestions were accepted except the new appeal procedure.

It was also fully accepted by a group of former CAQA members led by the former CAQA president prof Vera Vujčić. They also submitted to the Ministry their contribution to the public debate.

#### *14.3. Current challenges regarding CAQA's efforts to reveal HEIs that have issued PhD diplomas without being authorised*

After extensive public discussions about the quality of PhDs in 2015, which threatened to affect the reputation of the whole HE system in Serbia, CAQA committed itself to doing something about this within its competences and responsibility. At the end of that year we started to look in more detail at academic qualifications of teachers and especially at the origin of their PhD diplomas. In other words, we started to check if these diplomas were issued by HEIs authorized for this degree. Since then, we discovered cases of unauthorized issuing of PhD diplomas at 9 out of 10 private universities. As a result, CAQA has issued 67 Acts of warning up to now to address this problem. For this demanding work, CAQA has created a working body to create a small database of HEIs and teachers to help unify and catalogue the procedures and decisions.

### Glossary of terms

BAS	Basic Academic Studies
BPS	Basic Professional Studies
CAQA	Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
COHS	COncference of Higher Schools
CONUS	CONference of UniversitieS
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IAS	Integrated Academic Studies
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
LoHE	Law on Higher Education
MAS	Master Academic Studies
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
QA	Quality Assurance
SCOHS	Student COncference of Higher Schools
SCONUS	Student CONference of UniversitieS

## **List of Annexes**

- Annex 1.** Law on higher education (OG 45/2015)
- Annex 2.** Standards of CAQA's work
- Annex 3.** Rules, procedures and organisation of CAQA's work
- Annex 4.** Review of CAQA's finances in the period 2012-2016
- Annex 5.** Standards, rules and procedures for accreditation of HEIs
- Annex 6.** Standards, rules and procedures for accreditation of study programmes of I and II level
- Annex 7.** Standards, rules and procedures for accreditation of doctoral study programmes
- Annex 8.** Standards and procedures for initial accreditation of HEIs and their study programmes
- Annex 9.** Standards and procedures for external quality control (audit) of HEIs with follow-up
- Annex 10.** Standards for self-evaluation of HEIs