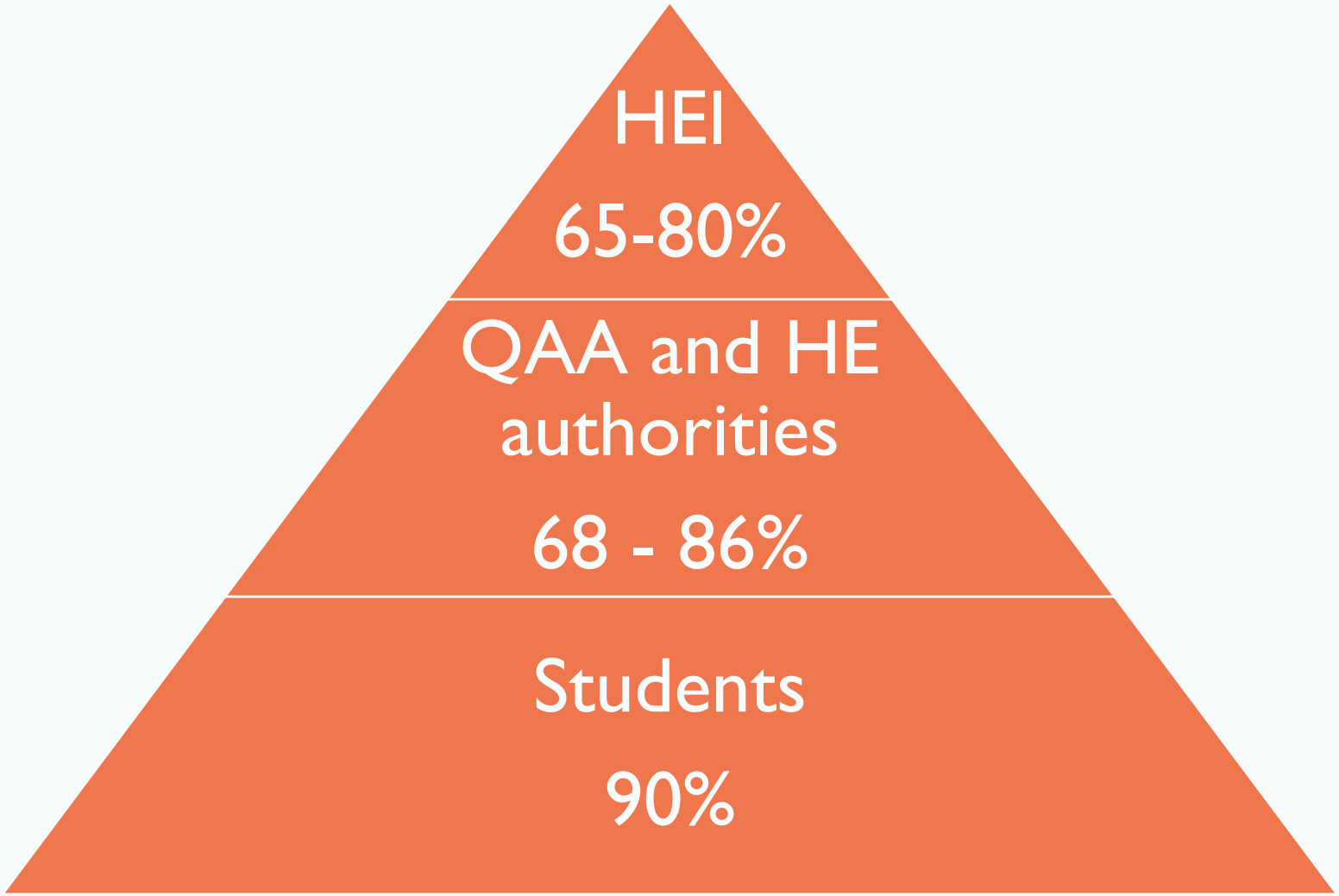
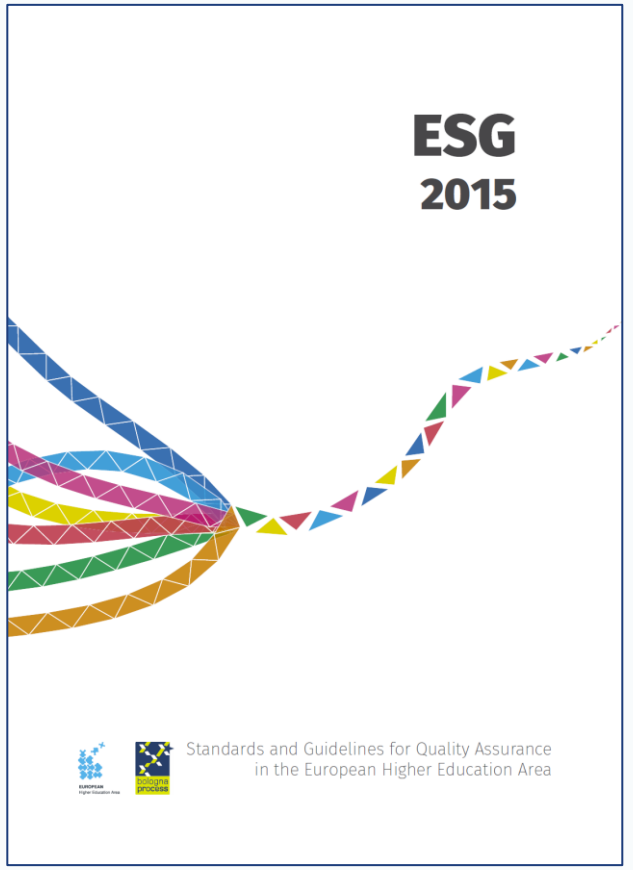
ESG REVISION

CRISTINA GHITULICA, ENQA PRESIDENT

OCTOBER 2026

IS THE REVISION NEEDED?

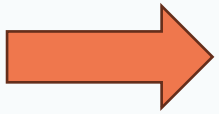




QA-FIT
Quality Assurance Fit for the Future

WHY UPDATE THE ESG?

Societal trends	Higher education trends	Quality assurance trends
• Digital transition, artificial intelligence • Green transition, sustainability • Geopolitical instability	• Internationalisation • Flexible learning pathways, lifelong learning • Social dimension • Fundamental values of higher education	• Maturity of internal & external QA • More institutional level EQA • Balancing accountability and enhancement • Evaluation fatigue, QA inflation



What is the role of the ESG in addressing and/or promoting change?

MANDATE

*We invite the authors of the **ESG to propose a revised version by 2026** to the BFUG, to be adopted by us at our 2027 Ministerial conference, as well as an **adjustment**, where required, of the **European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.***



STRUCTURES

ESG Steering Committee	• Representatives of ENQA, EUA, EURASHE, ESU, EQAR, Education International & Business Europe • Coordinate the overall process, including main directions and consultations
ESG Drafting Group	• Representatives of ENQA, EUA, EURASHE & ESU • Prepare drafts and identify issues for further discussion
ENQA Internal Reference Group	• Representatives of Board, ARC, staff • Coordinate ENQA's position on key issues and consultations with the Board, members/affiliates, and ARC/review coordinators

TIMELINE

September 2024: revision process launched

Draft I

Winter 2025: public consultation on full draft

BFUG consultation

Draft II

March 2026

Feedback BFUG

Draft III

Summer 2026

Written feedback BFUG

22 răspunsuri RO

- 2 IÎS
- 1 federație studențească
- 19 studenți

REVISION PRINCIPLES

Agreement between stakeholders

- **The importance of a European quality assurance framework,** particularly to promote **common minimum standards** in higher education, foster **improvement**, and facilitate the **recognition** of qualifications.
- The ESGs are still **necessary**.
- The ESGs support the **improvement of education quality, quality culture, trust** in qualifications, and student **mobility**.
- The ESG should provide more **guidance**.

Disagreement between stakeholders

- Most students believe the main purpose of higher education is to support **students' personal development**, while for ministries, quality assurance agencies, and higher education institutions it is "preparing students for their future **careers**".
- A larger share of students, compared to quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions, consider the **scope of the ESG to be too limited**.

REVISION PRINCIPLES

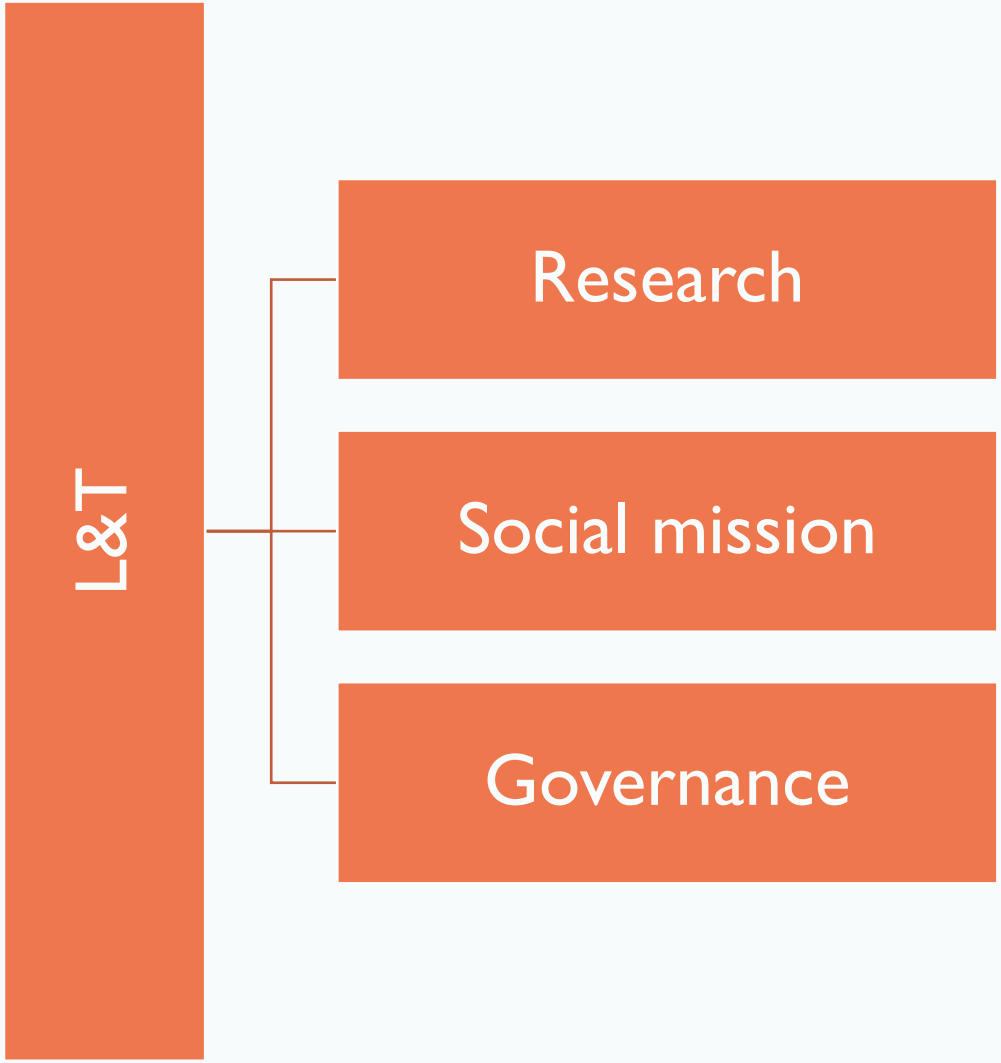
ESG 2015 to ESG 2027: ***evolution*** *not revolution!*

- Don't fix what isn't broken
- Bring it **up to date** (without anchoring it in 2025/26!)
- **Caution against overloading** the ESG with too many topics, as this risks diminishing its impact, but ensure **alignment** with other Bologna Process policies,
- The ESG should focus on **learning, teaching** (and assessment), but with a stronger reference to links with **research and the social mission.**
- The ESG are **standards for quality assurance**, not for quality itself (with a few exceptions), and should support **different concepts** of quality assurance,
- The **standards** must be **self-explanatory**, while the **guidelines** support **implementation in different contexts** (instead of explaining the concepts mentioned in the standards - remove unnecessary explanations),
- Address **areas of unclarity** based on application experience and **move some aspects** from guidelines into standards

INTRODUCTION:
CONTEXT, SCOPE, PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES

- **Restructuring** to avoid overlaps and to address, in logical order, the concepts of quality, quality assurance, as well as the goals, scope, purposes, and principles of the ESG.
- The context was **updated** to reflect the changes in higher education systems over the last ten years and address aspects such as resilience, international cooperation, multiculturalism, and the EHEA's fundamental values and social dimension.
- The need to promote the **social dimension** and **the fundamental values** of higher education, as part of quality education, is emphasised.

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT, SCOPE, PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES



*The focus of the ESG is on quality assurance related to **learning and teaching** in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to **research**, **innovation**, and **societal engagement**. In addition, institutions should have policies and processes to ensure and improve **governance** and the quality of all their activities, also taking into consideration **digital transition and the emerging use of artificial intelligence**.*

- ✓ The scope of application was clarified to more explicitly cover all modes/providers of education, including micro-credentials, lifelong learning, joint programmes, transnational education.

PURPOSES

- ✓ A new purpose was added on supporting stakeholders in continuously monitoring and enhancing education, and international cooperation was made explicit.

The ESG have the following core purposes:

- *They set a core **common framework** for quality assurance systems for learning and teaching at European, national and institutional level;*
- *They enable the **assurance and improvement** of quality of higher education in the EHEA;*
- *They support diverse groups of stakeholders in higher education systems in continuously **monitoring and enhancing** the education provided;*
- *They support **mutual trust**, thus facilitating **recognition** and **mobility** within and across national borders and facilitating **international cooperation**;*
- *They provide **information** on quality assurance in the EHEA.*

KEY TERMS

- A glossary was introduced, defining the use of terms in the context of the ESG:

External quality assurance
Higher education
Institution
Internal quality assurance
Joint programme
Programme
Quality assurance
Stakeholders

PART 1: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (2015)	PART 1: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (draft 3)
1.1 POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE	1.1 POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
1.2 DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES	1.2 DESIGN, APPROVAL, ONGOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES
1.3 STUDENT CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT	1.3 STUDENT CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT
1.4 STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION	1.4 STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION
1.5 TEACHING STAFF	1.5 TEACHING STAFF
1.6 LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT	1.6 LEARNING ENVIROMENT AND RESOURCES
1.7 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	1.7 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
1.8 PUBLIC INFORMATION	1.8 PUBLIC INFORMATION
1.9 ON-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES	
1.10 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE	1.9 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

PART I

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Clarify that the quality assurance policy should be effectively **communicated**, refer to L&T&A, and lead to continuous **improvement**,

The policy should be integrated in both the **strategic and operational management** of the institution (2015 – strategic management only),

More focus on the **role of stakeholders** – structured, meaningful and more visible; key outcomes and measures to be shared with them,

The 2015 list of what the policy "supports" is enlarged by alignment with institutional policies safeguarding the **social dimension** and **fundamental values** (academic freedom, academic integrity, public responsibility), implications of **digital transformation**, including artificial intelligence.

PART I

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have in place, publish and effectively communicate a clear policy for quality assurance of learning, teaching and assessment, with associated structures and supporting a coherent system that forms an effective cycle of continuous improvement.

The quality assurance policy should be integrated in the strategic and operational management of the institution, ensuring links with the other institutional missions.

The development and implementation of the policy for quality assurance should include a structured, meaningful and visible role for students, staff, and other internal and external stakeholders. The core outcomes of the quality assurance processes and the measures taken should be shared with the stakeholders, including students and staff.

PART I

1.2 Design, approval, ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Clarify as part of the standards what the processes should ensure: coherence, consider **latest academic and professional developments**, and was added the need to respond to the **labour market requirements**, supporting **employability**,

Specific reference to compliance with **professional and disciplinary standards** included,

The **qualification** to be specified and communicated,

Students are **equal partners**, while other stakeholders are systematically and meaningfully involved.

PART I

1.2 Design, approval, ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design, approval, monitoring and periodic review of their programmes to ensure that they are coherent, informed by the latest academic and professional developments, and reliable in leading to the intended learning outcomes. These processes should ensure that programmes respond to the needs of students, society and the labour market, supporting graduates' employability. They should involve relevant internal and external stakeholders, including students, staff and graduates, and lead to continuous improvement of the education provision. Programmes should be revised based on the analysis of information collected during monitoring and periodic review, and any action planned or taken as a result of monitoring and periodic review of programmes should be communicated to all those concerned.

The programmes should be designed using the learning outcomes-based approach.

The qualification and learning outcomes should correspond to the correct level of the national qualifications' framework for higher education which is aligned to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, and to professional or disciplinary standards. The qualification resulting from a programme should be specified and communicated.

PART I

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

The standard now covers both the **design** and the delivery of programmes (ESG 2015 – delivery only);

L&T should support students to take an **active role**, instead of only encouraging them,

The **use of digital tools, including artificial intelligence**, in learning, teaching and assessment must be responsible, human-centred and subject to human verification was added to the standard,

Guidelines describe now examples of **how QA can support SCL**, rather than describe SCL,

Among the pedagogical methods, those that effectively **use digital and technological tools** to support learning outcomes are mentioned,

The **culture of mutual respect** within the student-teacher relationship is reflected in institutional policies and feedback mechanisms,

The ESG 2015 "formal procedure for student appeals" is extended to "**complaints and appeals**" and it is described as visible, accessible, and include regular publication of anonymised outcomes and actions taken.

PART I

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are designed and delivered in a way that fosters an active role of students in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach. Learning and teaching processes should support students in taking such an active role.

The use of digital tools, including artificial intelligence, in learning, teaching and assessment should be responsible, human-centred and subject to human verification.

PART I

1.4 Student Admission, Progression, Recognition, and Certification

- "**fairly**“ it is added to the manner of implementation;
- Recognition is extended from "periods of study and prior learning" to explicitly include **work placements**;
- Graduation documentation refer explicitly to the **diploma supplement**.

PART I

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": student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

PART I

1.5 Teaching Staff

- Extended from "teachers" to "**all staff** involved in education delivery";
- **Evaluation** of staff added in the standard,
- Recruitment, development and evaluation of staff should reflect the **institutional mission, programmes and the evolving role of staff**,
- The need to have a sufficient share of core staff under **long-term employment** added,

- The institution's responsibility is extended to regular **review** of teaching practice,
- **Student feedback** is incorporated into teacher evaluation, alongside other evidence,
- The supportive working environment now explicitly includes fostering **staff well-being and mental health**,
- The research–teaching link is extended to include "the **societal mission** of higher education".

PART I

1.5 Teaching Staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of all staff involved in education delivery.

They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment, development and evaluation of the staff.

These processes should reflect the institutional mission, its programmes and objectives, as well as the evolving role of staff.

To ensure continuity in their activities, institutions should have a sufficient share of core staff under long-term employment.

PART I

1.6 Learning environment and resources

- Digital and physical infrastructure added as part of the learning environment,
- Guidelines refer more generally to "diverse student population“ and “infrastructure”;
- Types of personal involved as human support is described more comprehensively.

1.7 Information Management

- Information should be in addition **reliable** and **up-to-date** and **collected periodically**;
- Include **staff** among categories of data to be collected.

1.8 Public Information

- In the information to be published were included relevant **outcomes of quality assurance processes.**

PART I

1.6 Learning environment and resources

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

1.7 Information Management

Institutions should periodically collect, analyse and use relevant, reliable and up-to-date information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

1.8 Public Information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes and relevant outcomes of quality assurance processes. Information provided should be clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible to its intended audiences.

PART I

Former standard 1.9 "On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes" (ESG 2015)

Standard removed as a standalone standard - its content is fully absorbed into standard 1.2

1.9 Cyclical external quality assurance

- New requirement to **address**, where relevant, the **outcomes of the previous review,**
- Institutions ensure that the external quality assurance procedures they undergo meet **applicable regulatory requirements,**

- Institutions are "strongly encouraged" to **publish their self-assessment reports**.

PART I

1.9 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG, on a cyclical basis, addressing, where relevant, the outcomes of the previous review. Institutions should ensure that the external quality assurance procedures that they undergo meet the regulatory requirements, if applicable.

PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (2015)	PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (draft 3)
2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE	2.1 **ADDRESSING** INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE	2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE
2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES	2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES
2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS	2.4 PEER **REVIEWERS**
2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES	**2.5** REPORTING
2.6 REPORTING	**2.6 PROCESSES** AND CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES
2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS	2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

PART 2

2.1 Addressing internal quality assurance

- Clarify that standards in Part 1 should be covered holistically by the different applicable quality assurance processes for each institution,
- External quality assurance should verify that the evaluated programme corresponds to the correct level of the QF-EHEA.

- Guidelines express the idea that different types of QA might be in place, and consequently standards in Part 1 may be **addressed differently**.

2.2 Designing Methodologies Fit for Purpose

- Explicitly adds the "**dual purpose** of accountability and enhancement" as an objective of external quality assurance methodologies;
- Added that the design of methodologies should take into consideration the relevant **legal and regulatory context** for higher education;

PART 2

2.3 Implementing processes

- Was added the requirement that processes should be **adapted to the methodology** described in standard 2.2,
- The site visit is now explicitly described as an "**in-person by peer reviewers"** and including **stakeholder interviews** (moved from guidelines), that should assure input from **different perspectives**,
- The use of **digital tools, including artificial intelligence**, in external quality assurance processes must be responsible, human-centred and subject to human verification, was added to the standard,

- Hybrid or online participation for interviewees can ensure a wider range of perspectives.

PART 2

2.4 Peer reviewers

- The **selection** of peer reviewers should consider the aims of the external evaluation process,
- The obligation for the agency to organise appropriate **training and preparation** for peer reviewers was moved to the standard,

- Anyone contributing to external quality assurance activities acts in a **personal capacity**, not representing their constituent organisation, and any procedure or decision is based solely on expertise **and evidence** (moved from ESG 2015 standard 3.3).

PART 2

2.5 Reporting

- New element: reports must be **useful** for the evaluated institution and provide **recommendations** for improvement,
- Verification of **factual accuracy** by the institution was moved to the standard,

- Reports may be made available in a searchable electronic format **and published in DEQAR.**

PART 2

2.6 Processes and Criteria for Outcomes

- Includes explicitly the **process** to reach outcomes – better clarify that outcomes, including formal decisions, should be based on evidence collected and analysed through the review process as **documented in the peer reviewers' report,**
- Agencies should provide transparent information on if and **how outcomes may be recognised** by relevant authorities (*deletion of former standard 3.2 from ESG 2015*),
- If decision-making is based on additional documents beyond the review report, such **documents must be published** together with the decision,

- Guidelines indicate as example of good practice the limitation of additional documents in decision-making beyond peer-review reports.

2.7 Complaints and Appeals

- Clarify that appeals should be considered by a **different structure** within the agency than the one whose decision is appealed against;

- Agencies may also have a **policy for complaints from third parties.**

PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES (2015)

3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS
3.3 INDEPENDENCE
3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS
3.5 RESOURCES
3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES (draft 3)

3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

3.2 INDEPENDENCE
3.3 ACTIVITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT
3.5 RESOURCES
3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND **INTEGRITY**
3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

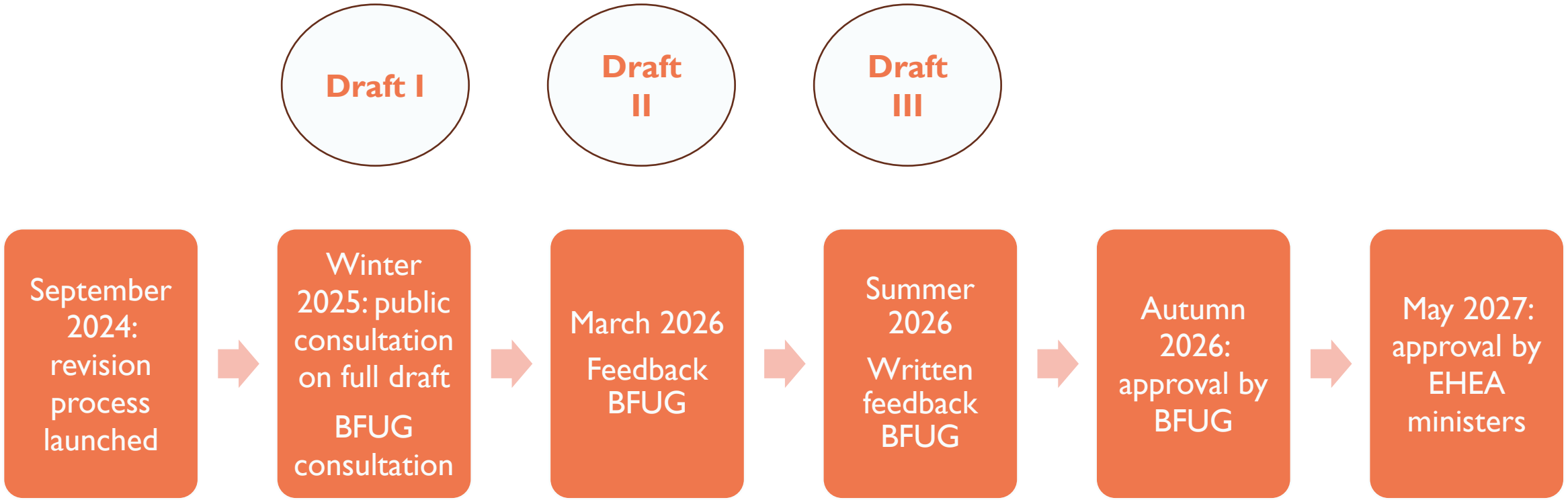
PART 3

- The need to make a clear **distinction of the activities that are not in the scope of the E**SG was moved to the standard and the requirement to be communicated to the wide public was added (**3.1**),
- Standard 3.2 on **official status deleted** (2.6),
- **Third party influence was extended** to undue influence from any stakeholder, entity, or individual (3.2),
- The three **dimensions of independence** added to the standard with a brief description (**3.2**),
- Shifts to **broader engagement in enhancement activities**, reflection, and dissemination of materials, as long as they support enhancement (**3.3**),

PART 3

- **Resources** should support effective and sustainable implementation of the activities (**3.4**),
- **Professional development** opportunities for agency staff included in the standard, and specifically mentioned that it should include the use of digital technologies (**3.4**);
- The **internal quality policy** should be published (**3.5**),
- **High professional standards** and effective tools to prevent conflicts of interest and **integrity** were included in the standard (**3.5**),
- Requirement to address, where relevant, the **outcomes** of the previous review (mirroring standard 1.9) (**3.6)**.

TIMELINE ESG



TIMELINE EA

Draft I

Draft II

Draft III

December 2025: revision process launched

July 2026: targeted consultation

November 2026 feedback BFUG

February 2027 approval by BFUG

May 2027: approval by EHEA ministers

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