

2025 European Quality Assurance Forum

QA in times of crises

Ensuring stability, autonomy and international cooperation in higher education

**Hosted by Corvinus University Of Budapest, Hungary
12-14 November 2025**

Overview of contributions sessions

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Thursday 13 November
Session I

Time slot	Number	Title	Presenters	Room
Workshop				
11.00 – 12.45	W1	Scientific Method in Quality Assurance: Gateway to Transparency or Threat to Data Protection?	Pegi Pavletić	Room 324, 3 rd floor, Building E
	W2	Quality assurance and academic freedom	Caroline Tovatt, Martin Bergman, Maria Wikse	Room 326, 3 rd floor, Building E
	W3	Proactive and Agile External Quality Assurance in the Age of Generative AI	Marie Gould	Room 328, 3 rd floor, Building E
	W4	QA Under Pressure: Designing Agile Systems for Uncertain Times	Ayşegül Kozak Çakır, Ümit Kocabağ	Room 67, ground floor, Building E
	W5	Toward Integrated Internal Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes: The SEA-EU Experience	Fernando Perez-Peña, María de Andrés, Thorbjørn Aakre, Monica Brobak, Manuel Arcila Garrido	Room 322, 3 rd floor, Building E
Paper				
11.00 – 11.45	P1	Additions to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and their Underlying Visions of Quality	Eltjo Bazen	Room 330, 3 rd floor, Building E
	P2	Post-Conflict Trends in Kosovo's Accreditation System: Redefining the Balance Between Institutions, the State, and the KAA	Linda Ukimeraj Harris	Room 332, 3 rd floor, Building E
	P3	The value(s) of quality assurance - navigating between societal relevance and political influence	Oliver Vettori	Room 236, 2 nd floor, Building E

	P4	Agility of Ukrainian Higher Education Under Martial Law: Stakeholders' Perspectives	Nataliia Stukalo, Fedir Shandor, Kyrylo Demchenko	Room 238, 2 nd floor, Building E
12.00 – 12.45	P5	Remote assessment in higher education: a framework for quality and integrity	Marilena Maniaci	Room 330, 3 rd floor, Building E
	P6	From Compliance to Collaboration: Redefining QA in Challenging Times through Digital Innovation	Joel Azzopardi	Room 332, 3 rd floor, Building E
	P7	Performance Indicators in Higher Education Institutions: A Comparative Analysis of International Reference Models	Susana Lameiras	Room 236, 2 nd floor, Building E
	P8	A thematic analysis of European Approach Joint Programme reviews	Beate Tremel	Room 238, 2 nd floor, Building E



**Thursday 13 November
Session II**

Time slot	Number	Title	Presenters	Room
Paper				
14.15 – 15.00	P9	Joint Efforts for Quality Enhancement: HAKA-NAQA Partnership to Support Ukrainian Universities through Institutional Accreditation	Nataliia Stukalo, Hillar Bauman, Nadiia Kovalchuk	Room 236, 2 nd floor, Building E
	P10	Listening to the student voice: The strategic review of Ireland's survey of student engagement StudentSurvey.ie	Valerie Harvey	Room 238, 2 nd floor, Building E
	P11	Crossing Borders, Crossing Lines? Navigating the Ethical Minefield of CBQA	Ștefania-Maria Armășelu, Lien Beyls, Jennifer Osborne, Emilia Primeri	Room 330, 3 rd floor, Building E
	P12	Agility and independence based on the challenges of the PKA Polish Accreditation Committee	Jakub Brdulak, Natalia Wiktoria Greniewska	Room 332, 3 rd floor, Building E
	P13	Policy and Practice Gaps in Quality in Times of Disruption: A Case of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg	Derrick Zitha	Room 3001, 3 rd floor, Building E
	P14	Strengthening Integrity: Austria's Strategic Approach to Proactive Quality Assurance	Ulrike Najar	Room 3005, 3 rd floor, Building E
	P15	The impact of student partnership – how embedding student partnership in the Scottish Tertiary Enhancement Framework is supporting responsiveness and resilience at an institutional and national level in Scotland	Debra Macfarlane	Room I, ground floor, Building E

	P16	Quality Assurance as a Catalyst for Institutional Policy Reform in Times of Crisis	Justyna Smoleń	Room II, ground floor, Building E
Poster Presentation				
14.15 – 15.00	Po1	Quality Assurance as a Foundation for Creating Learning Experiences and Strengthening International Cooperation and Mobility	Anna Beitane	Corridor, Building E
	Po2	Chronopolitics of Quality Assurance: gatekeeping or joint action? Time as a Strategic Resource (Case study of system accreditation in Germany 2018-2024)	Sofia Treskova	Corridor, Building E
	Po3	Agile Assurance: Balancing Autonomy and Accountability in QA	Gemma Long	Corridor, Building E
	Po4	DIVERSE European University Alliance's Approach to Micro-Credentials	Ana Tecilazić	Corridor, Building E
	Po5	Exploring Quality Labels in Higher Education: A Tool for Fostering Trust and International Collaboration?	Giorgi Munjishvili	Corridor, Building E
	Po6	Which indicators can help make quality understood? Insights from the QualityLink project	Colin Tück	Corridor, Building E
	Po7	Building Institutional Resilience through Participatory Quality Assurance	Szilvia Besze	Corridor, Building E
	Po8	Quality Assurance in Language Learning: Ensuring Sustainable International Cooperation in Higher Education	Katarzyna Gajda	Corridor, Building E

**Friday 14 November
Session III**

Time slot	Number	Title	Presenters	Room
Workshop				
09.30 – 11.15	W6	Enhancing the student voice in the transforming landscape of higher education – Independent student submissions and other strategies to engage students in institutional reviews	Charlotte Elam, Ali Al-Soufi	Room 326, 3 rd floor, Building E
	W7	Evaluating and Enhancing Student Partnership and its role in institutional resilience: practical steps to establishing an effective approach to student engagement and partnership within the quality assurance and enhancement arena	Eve Lewis, Ali McDade, Megan Brown	Room 322, 3 rd floor, Building E
	W8	„What Do Students Really Say?” – Analysing Open-Ended Course Feedback with the Help of AI	Beata Udvari, Zsolt Szántó	Room 328, 3 rd floor, Building E
	W9	Co-Piloting Quality: Building Resilient QA Practices Across Borders	Angela Kipf, Mara Noblet, Nicole O'Neill	Room 324, 3 rd floor, Building E
	W10	Students as Evaluators: Building Peer-Led Quality Networks in Practice	Ann Gvritishvili, Gaga Gvenetadze	Room 67, ground floor, Building E
Paper				
09.30 – 10.15	P17	Complex Dynamic of Student Integration in QA: Innovative Insights from Top Management in Turkish Higher Education	Eren Çanga	Room 236, 2 nd floor, Building E

	P18	Higher Education as Refuge: Georgia's Response to National and Foreign Refugee Crisis	Ana Kamladze, Mariam Kurtanidze	Room 238, 2 nd floor, Building E
	P19	Implementation of Virtual Objective Structured Clinical Examination at Tbilisi State Medical University	Khatuna Todadze	Room 330, 3 rd floor, Building E
	P20	Quality Assurance of Student Blended Mobility	Mark Frederiks	Room 332, 3 rd floor, Building E
10.30 – 11.15	P21	Anticipating Change: Designing AI-Ready QA Systems for Future-Proof Universities	Tea Imedadze	Room 236, 2 nd floor, Building E
	P22	Beyond Compatibility: Quality Assurance for Fostering Convergence in European Universities Alliances	Timothée Toury	Room 238, 2 nd floor, Building E
	P23	Redefining "Proactive QA" in the AI Era: a student-driven policy model within international AI Governance frameworks	Stanisław Zabandżała	Room 330, 3 rd floor, Building E
	P24	Quality Without Borders: Sustaining Joint Degrees Through Collaborative Assurance	Rima Isaifan	Room 332, 3 rd floor, Building E



Description of sessions

Workshops:

WORKSHOP 1: Scientific Method in Quality Assurance: Gateway to Transparency or Threat to Data Protection?

Time: Thursday 13 November, 11.00-12.45

Room: Room 324, 3rd floor, Building E

Facilitators: Pegi Pavletić, University of Rijeka

Abstract:

Scientific method in research underlines the repeatability, reproducibility and robustness of data produced by research. Research is composed of several steps: asking questions based on observations; performing background research on the state-of-the-art on the topic; forming research hypotheses; performing experiments to test the hypotheses; analysing data and forming conclusions; communicating results. Although quality assurance (QA) in itself does not define the methodology applied to the processes of evaluation, it is clear that many parallels can be drawn to the scientific method.

Past evaluations of HEI/programme/agency can give the reviewers an overview of the current state of QA. Through ESG, QA is defined by standards applicable to multiple levels of QA work, and relevant stakeholders (like HEIs', students' and labour market representatives) are engaged. In a scientific sense, ESGs are a set of pre-defined research questions, while the site visit is an experiment in which the panel can collect data for later analysis. Publishing of the reports would then present a form of results communication. However, the question arising is whether the scientific method should be applied to ESG, or, due to the variety of stakeholders, whether QA should remain detached from the rigour of scientific work.

WORKSHOP 2: Quality assurance and academic freedom

Time: Thursday 13 November, 11.00-12.45

Room: Room 326, 3rd floor, Building E

Facilitators: Caroline Tovatt, Martin Bergman, Maria Wikse, Swedish Higher Education Authority

Abstract:

According to the ESG (1.1), institutions should have a policy for quality assurance (QA) that supports academic integrity and freedom.

In Sweden, individual academic freedom has been regulated in law since 2021. HEIs need to work actively to implement academic freedom in practice, in both in research and education. Institutional leadership is responsible for prioritising academic freedom and promoting a culture that allows free choice of topics and free dissemination of knowledge. In 2024, UKÄ conducted a study on academic freedom in Sweden. The results showed that:

- Fear of threats and hate can affect the topics that become subjects for research and dissemination.
- HEI employees experience homogenisation within the academic environment, lack of openness and a tendency to avoid standing out.
- Even employees who are familiar with their institution's support structures choose not to seek assistance when their academic freedom is challenged.

The study raises challenging issues regarding the balance between employees' freedom of expression, the HEI responsibility to protect academic freedom, and its duty to maintain a safe working environment. Dialogues with students, doctoral students and researchers about a good academic culture and how that is linked to academic freedom could help foster greater understanding.

WORKSHOP 3: Proactive and Agile External Quality Assurance in the Age of Generative AI

Time: Thursday 13 November, 11.00-12.45

Room: Room 328, 3rd floor, Building E

Facilitators: Marie Gould, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Abstract:

As noted in the opening statement on the objectives for this Forum, 'Quality assurance can play a crucial role in equipping the higher education sector to face rapid and dramatic shifts in political, economic and technological landscapes, alongside other societal transformations'. To maintain and strengthen this role, QA systems must be agile, responsive and forward thinking. The effectiveness of QA systems influences how our universities continue to educate, innovate and contribute to society in this challenging and changing landscape. External quality assurance (EQA) must become more flexible and responsive to maintain its relevance and effectiveness. Drawing on two pilot projects in QQI, case studies will be presented to share insights and learning from using Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in conducting thematic analysis. These and additional questions will promote interactive discussions with participants in exploring ethical and operational aspects of GenAI in EQA. The discussions will aim to generate ideas both for inter-agency cooperation and information on how agencies should engage with HEIs on this topic.

WORKSHOP 4: QA Under Pressure: Designing Agile Systems for Uncertain Times

Time: Thursday 13 November, 11.00-12.45

Room: Room 67, ground floor, Building E

Facilitator: Ayşegül Kozak Çakır, Ümit Kocabiçak, Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC)

Abstract:

This interactive workshop explores how higher education quality assurance (QA) systems have responded to overlapping crises—from pandemics to cyberattacks and institutional disruptions—and how these responses can evolve into long-term reforms. Through three participatory activities, participants will map major crisis events and institutional QA responses, engage in a simulation exercise to develop adaptive strategies under fictional crisis conditions, and co-design innovative QA indicators or tools supporting resilience and institutional agility.

Designed for QA professionals, agency representatives, students, and academic leaders, the session will offer insights into fostering proactive, forward-looking QA frameworks. Participants will gain hands-on experience in conducting situational diagnostics, stress-testing QA systems, and crafting tools for future preparedness.

The session structure allows flexibility for varying group sizes and institutional backgrounds, ensuring dynamic peer learning. Outputs will include cross-cutting themes, transferable tools, and lessons learned, providing a valuable contribution to shaping agile QA systems across different contexts.

WORKSHOP 5: Toward Integrated Internal Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes: The SEA-EU Experience

Time: Thursday 13 November, 11.00-12.45

Room: Room 322, 3rd floor, Building E

Facilitators: Fernando Perez-Peña, María de Andrés and Manuel Arcila Garrido, University of Cadiz; Thorbjørn Aakre and Monica Brobak, Nord University

Abstract:

As European universities deepen their collaboration through a joint educational offer, aligning internal quality assurance (IQA) systems becomes essential. This workshop will explore the challenges and opportunities of integrating IQA frameworks among the partner institutions involved in The European University of the Seas (SEA-EU), particularly in the context of preparing joint programmes for accreditation under the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

Considering the experience of the SEA-EU alliance, which brings together universities from nine different countries, the session will focus on how institutional QA procedures can be harmonised to meet the European standards while respecting local contexts. Key topics will include mutual recognition of internal processes, joint governance structures, and shared tools for learning outcomes, student feedback, and worldwide mobility. Special emphasis will be given to the lessons learned in initiating a cross-institutional self-assessment, aligning programme specifications, and navigating the preparatory phase for a joint accreditation application.

Participants can engage by proposing how challenges to their own IQAs can be aligned with the European approach, aiming at integration and trust-based cooperation across the European Higher Education Area.

WORKSHOP 6: Enhancing the student voice in the transforming landscape of higher education – Independent student submissions and other strategies to engage students in institutional reviews

Time: Friday 14 November, 09.30-11.15

Room: Room 326, 3rd floor, Building E

Facilitator: Charlotte Elam and Ali Al-Soufi, Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ)

Abstract:

Student participation in QA is a cornerstone of quality in higher education. Sweden has a long tradition of student influence in decision-making at HEIs and in QA. Students participate in the QA procedures that the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) is responsible for. They contribute as assessors in review panels, and student representatives are interviewed at site visits. However, the preconditions for student influence are changing. Challenges identified in dialogue with the Swedish National Union of Students (SFS) include an increase in courses and programmes online or part-time, and many students are therefore rarely, or never, on campus. Investments in lifelong learning and an increase in international students contribute to a diversification of the student population in terms of age, life-situation and language skills. Further, international collaborations place high demand on transparency in quality assurance and equal opportunity for all students to engage in QA.

Since 2016, UKÄ's institutional reviews allow for a student submission that student unions can choose to submit to the agency. Students are given the opportunity to independently reflect on QA and may also comment on the self-evaluation report submitted by the HEI. UKÄ is currently investigating other methods to promote and enhance student participation during site visits and interviews.

WORKSHOP 7: Evaluating and Enhancing Student Partnership and its role in institutional resilience: practical steps to establishing an effective approach to student engagement and partnership within the quality assurance and enhancement arena

Time: Friday 14 November, 09.30-11.15

Room: Room 322, 3rd floor, Building E

Facilitator: Eve Lewis, Ali McDade, Megan Brown, Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs)

Abstract:

In October 2024, Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs) published Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership. It is comprised of an aspirational statement for the tertiary sector in Scotland to work towards; eight underpinning features of student partnership; and a set of indicators which explore how each feature can be put into practice. Together, these elements are designed to operate as a practical tool for institutions to embed effective student partnership across their activities and quality processes.

This workshop will introduce participants to the Partnership Ambition and provide an opportunity to use the features and indicators of student partnership in practice, to evaluate and enhance student partnership within the participant's own institution, students' union or national agency. The workshop will also explore with attendees the particular importance of developing effective student partnership in the context of contemporary challenges within higher education, including the cost of living crisis; increasing demands on students' time and resources; the rise of Gen AI; and the climate crisis. Together, we will consider how these challenges can be most successfully overcome by working in partnership with students and result in meaningful changes to the student experience for all learners across the higher education sector.

WORKSHOP 8: „What Do Students Really Say?” – Analysing Open-Ended Course Feedback with the Help of AI

Time: Friday 14 November, 09.30-11.15

Room: Room 328, 3rd floor, Building E

Facilitator: Beata Udvari and Zsolt Szántó, University of Szeged

Abstract:

In this interactive workshop, we explore how artificial intelligence can support the analysis of open-ended student feedback. While qualitative comments provide rich insights into teaching and learning, they're often underused due to the time and effort required to process them.

We will walk participants through a real case of manual feedback analysis, then compare it with results from AI-assisted tools. Through small-group activities, discussion, and live demonstration, we'll reflect on the value and limitations of using AI in educational quality assurance. Together, we'll consider where human judgment remains essential – and where technology can save time without sacrificing depth.

By the end, participants will leave with practical insights, critical questions, and ideas for applying AI to their own evaluation processes.

WORKSHOP 9: Co-Piloting Quality: Building Resilient QA Practices Across Borders

Time: Friday 14 November, 09.30-11.15

Room: Room 324, 3rd floor, Building E

Facilitator: Angela Kipf, Mara Noblet, Nicole O'Neill, FOREU4ALL Quality Assurance Topical Group

Abstract:

In times of political and societal crisis, quality assurance (QA) has a crucial role to play in strengthening the resilience, autonomy, and cooperation of higher education institutions. QA can serve not only as a stabilising force but also as a means to uphold academic values and safeguard public education as a shared societal good.

This interactive workshop draws on the experience of European University Alliances to explore how QA frameworks and practices can respond proactively to challenges such as joint programme accreditation, mobility, and cross-campus quality assurance (QA). Using a flight metaphor, participants will simulate real-life dilemmas based on authentic scenarios shared by alliance QA professionals.

Each group, or "flight crew," will receive different QA tools and national contexts—reflecting the complexity of transnational education. Working together, they will assess risks, navigate conflicting standards, and adapt to unexpected disruptions. The workshop highlights the importance of trust, shared frameworks, and proactive communication in maintaining institutional autonomy and academic integrity under pressure.

Key takeaways will be synthesised into "pilot tips" and posted on a collective QA Flight Map. Insights will inform future peer learning through the FOREU4ALL QA Community of Practice.

WORKSHOP 10: Students as Evaluators: Building Peer-Led Quality Networks in Practice

Time: Friday 14 November, 09.30-11.15

Room: Room 67, ground floor, Building E

Facilitator: Ann Gvritishvili, International Black Sea University; Gaga Gvenetadze, Tbilisi State University

Abstract:

Student voices are increasingly recognised as essential to quality assurance (QA), yet many institutions struggle to move beyond traditional feedback surveys toward meaningful student partnership in QA processes (Bovill & Felten, 2016). This workshop addresses practical challenges in building peer-to-peer quality networks where students actively contribute to assessment and improvement processes.

We'll share cases from across the world, specifically Georgia, Iceland and Lebanon, where student peer networks have supported institutional QA, while also helping students develop confidence and evaluative skills. We'll address common implementation barriers including student motivation, academic staff rigidity, and integration with formal QA processes (Healey et al., 2014).

Participants will hear from each other about how peer feedback systems, student quality circles, and collaborative assessment projects have been started or could be started in different contexts. We'll also talk honestly about what can get in the way, like staff hesitation or low student engagement, and how others have worked around these challenges.

Papers:

PAPER 1: Additions to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and their Underlying Visions of Quality

Time: Thursday 13 November, 11.00-11.45

Room: Room 330, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Eltjo Bazen, HU UAS Utrecht

Chair: Natalia Greniewska

Abstract:

This research aims to give the reader more understanding of quality and quality assurance (QA) in higher education. Rather than looking at the implementation of the obligatory Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principle by quality assurance agencies (QAAs), it focuses on which other elements these QAAs incorporated into external quality assurance (EQA) activities. Moreover, it lays out what these additions say about different visions of quality. The main research question is:

- What vision(s) of quality appear(s) in the additions to the ESG made by QAAs in their EQA activities of higher education, how widely is/are this/these vision(s) spread and how well do they fit to the ESG and its underlying vision of quality?

The concept of visions of quality is operationalised by the Concept of the Four Quality Paradigms (Van Kemenade & Hardjono, 2019). The paradigms in quality management are the empirical paradigm, the reference paradigm, the reflective paradigm and the emergence paradigm. These paradigms, in this order, are thought to be able to accommodate contexts ranging from tame to wicked (Rittel & Webber, 1973). A combination of desk research, questionnaires and expert interviews was used to gather data.

The results show a fairly close fit between the ESG and the additions made to them by the QAAs. The deviation visible between underlying visions of quality of the ESG and the additions made by the QAAs, is a very interesting and relevant one to developments in higher education. QAAs tend to make more additions capable of dealing with more wicked contexts. That QAAs feel the need to make these additions suggests that the ESG themselves are not fully adequate for dealing with these types of contexts. For this reason, it is advised that QAA additions will be included in the current discussions around the upcoming revision of the ESG.

PAPER 2: Post-Conflict Trends in Kosovo's Accreditation System: Redefining the Balance Between Institutions, the State, and the KAA

Time: Thursday 13 November, 11.00-11.45

Room: Room 332, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Linda Ukimeraj Harris, Heimerer College

Chair: Sylvie Navarre

Abstract:

Kosovo's higher education quality assurance (QA) system has evolved from a post-conflict necessity into a more balanced framework aligning institutions, the state, and the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA). This paper traces the evolving role and historical development of the KAA since its establishment in 2008 and examines how QA and accreditation efforts contributed to legitimacy and stabilisation in the post-war context. A crucial turning point was the 2017–2018 suspension of KAA from European networks (ENQA/EQAR) because of political interference, which was followed by significant reforms. Key changes in the legal framework – including a new 2023 law – have redefined the roles of the KAA, universities, and the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), aiming to ensure the agency's independence and enhance quality assurance among HEIs. Through specific case examples of public and private universities adapting their internal QA systems, the paper highlights how Kosovo's evolving QA model enhanced institutional resilience, autonomy, and integration into European higher education and provides at the end observations on the new balance in Kosovo's accreditation system.

PAPER 3: The value(s) of quality assurance - navigating between societal relevance and political influence

Time: Thursday 13 November, 11.00-11.45

Room: Room 236, 2nd floor, Building E

Presenter: Oliver Vettori, Vienna University of Economics and Business

Chair: Maria Kelo

Abstract:

While the discourse on quality assurance (QA) often emphasises conceptual and methodological aspects, QA's capacity to influence institutional priorities and to mirror, but also to reinforce, societal interests and values, is also a key aspect to consider. This is particularly relevant in the context of growing politicisation of higher education and rising societal polarisation. There is by now a growing consensus that quality in higher education is value-laden and context-dependent, yet the actual values embedded in and championed by QA frameworks have so far gained little attention. In particular, the invocation of "European values" in criteria for cross-border initiatives like the European Degree (such as democratic values, multilingualism, inclusiveness, green transition) raises important questions about how QA frameworks promote, interpret, or potentially constrain such values in national contexts. In this paper we intend to approach the multifaceted relationship between quality assurance and societal/political values conceptually, as well as empirically.

Methodologically, we conduct a qualitative comparative analysis of QA frameworks from seven different countries within the European Higher Education Area (Austria, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Portugal, Switzerland, the Holy See), each of which includes explicit standards on societal impact/relevance. Additionally, we examine two supranational frameworks (AACSB and EUA-IEP). Through an analysis of these frameworks' audit/system level approaches, we aim to show how values are operationalised and embedded in the QA criteria and processes. We explore how these frameworks respond to sociopolitical developments but also how interpretations of embedded values have evolved over time. In doing so, we highlight the inherent tensions between the need for operational stability in QA frameworks and the highly dynamic political environments in which they operate and to which they must adapt.

PAPER 4: Agility of Ukrainian Higher Education Under Martial Law: Stakeholders' Perspectives

Time: Thursday 13 November, 11.00-11.45

Room: Room 238, 2nd floor, Building E

Presenters: Nataliia Stukalo, National Agency for Higher Education QA (NAQA); Fedir Shandor, Ambassador to Ukraine in Hungary; Kyrylo Demchenko, Ukrainian Students

League

Chair: Michael Hofer

Abstract:

This paper explores how Ukrainian higher education has demonstrated agility and resilience under martial law, with perspectives from three key stakeholders: a professor, a student, and a Quality Assurance (QA) representative. Together, we present a multidimensional view of how institutions adapted to war, displacement, blackouts, and uncertainty.

From the professor's perspective, we focus on the rapid digital transformation of teaching. Institutions transitioned to hybrid and online models, employing asynchronous and synchronous methods. Faculty restructured curricula for digital delivery, using cloud tools, open resources, and flexible assessments to sustain academic standards. The experience of a "professor from the trenches" (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-62003180>) illustrates how lectures continued even from the battlefield.

The student's perspective highlights the lived experiences of learners pursuing education amid war. We explore how access to education was preserved for displaced students, those in occupied territories and those serving in the military. The role of innovative systems in maintaining motivation and academic quality will be discussed, alongside the impact of student organisations in fostering resilience, mutual aid, and volunteerism.

The QA representative addresses how Ukraine's National QA Agency upheld standards and integrity during wartime. Key measures included remote accreditation, digital data collection, adaptive evaluation frameworks, and transparent collaboration with institutions to maintain alignment with pre-war benchmarks and ESG 2015.

This tripartite presentation underscores the collective resolve of the Ukrainian academic community. By fostering collaboration among educators, students, and QA leaders, Ukraine's higher education has not only endured wartime strain but become more adaptive—offering vital lessons for global academia in crisis contexts.

PAPER 5: Remote assessment in higher education: a framework for quality and integrity

Time: Thursday 13 November, 12.00-12.45

Room: Room 330, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Marilena Maniaci, ANVUR Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes

Chair: Ana Gvritshvili

Abstract:

Higher education is undergoing a profound transformation, fuelled by technological innovation and a growing demand for flexible, inclusive learning. The REMOTE project, supported by the Erasmus+ programme, responds by enhancing the quality of remote learning and assessment—particularly in STEM disciplines, though its relevance extends broadly across academic fields.

The rapid digitalisation of education, accelerated by recent global events, has highlighted the urgent need for scalable, user-friendly platforms and robust assessment frameworks that uphold academic standards while addressing the needs of diverse learners. In this evolving context, blended learning models that combine online and in-person components are emerging as key to delivering both theoretical and practical competencies.

To support institutions and Quality Assurance (QA) Agencies in navigating these changes, a consortium of universities and external QA Agencies from Italy, Spain, and Portugal has developed a set of guidelines for remote assessment, closely aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The guidelines want to equip HEIs with practical tools for implementing remote assessments and offer QQAs a framework to evaluate the quality and integrity of such practices. So far, the rationale behind the document is to foster quality, integrity, and inclusivity in digital education, enhancing institutions' and QQA's digital assessment practices.

At the core of the guidelines are twelve standards that provide a structured framework for developing, implementing, and evaluating remote assessment practices. They address key areas such as institutional policies, digital infrastructure, assessment design, academic integrity, and learner support.

Ultimately, the ESG are a timely response to the changing educational landscape, some of them triggered by recent emergency events that highlighted the need for new approaches and answers to emerging challenges. They offer a shared and robust quality framework while supporting innovation, accountability, and student success in the digital age.

PAPER 6: From Compliance to Collaboration: Redefining QA in Challenging Times through Digital Innovation

Time: Thursday 13 November, 12.00-12.45

Room: Room 332, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Joel Azzopardi, University of Malta

Chair: Daniela Craciun

Abstract:

In the face of accelerating political, economic, and technological disruption, quality assurance (QA) in higher education must evolve to remain relevant, resilient, and

responsive. This practice-based presentation examines the University of Malta's (UM) digital peer review platform as a proactive QA initiative that integrates digital technologies to enhance adaptability, foster continuous improvement, and support institutional resilience.

Developed using sustainable, open-source technologies, the platform uses a flexible, inclusive, and transparent annual programme review process that allows academics to engage in reflective evaluations, deliver structured feedback, and foster a culture of collaboration, co-learning, and quality enhancement. The platform supports a no-code environment for customisable rubrics and review forms, adapting to emergent academic needs without requiring advanced technical expertise. Through collaboration, peer feedback, and real-time oversight, the system fosters a reflective academic culture rooted in shared ownership and continuous improvement. It acts as a QA tool and a catalyst for academic dialogue and innovation—critical qualities during times of disruption.

Programme coordinators engage multidisciplinary teams, including students, ensuring holistic evaluation through collaborative submission processes. Peer reviewers, guided by standardised rubrics, evaluate an annual programme review process with clarity and consistency, while automated aggregation of feedback highlights areas of consensus and contention. This structured yet dynamic approach enhances transparency and expedites decision-making, even under pressure.

In line with the EQAF 2025 theme, this case study demonstrates how digital QA systems can uphold academic values, promote institutional autonomy, and sustain public trust in higher education. By embedding QA into the everyday academic workflow, UM's model counteracts reductive, compliance-driven approaches and instead fosters participatory governance. Ultimately, UM's platform exemplifies how agilely QA infrastructure supports both quality and innovation in higher education. It serves as a scalable model for institutions seeking to enhance resilience, maintain educational excellence, and contribute meaningfully to society amid ongoing transformation.

PAPER 7: Performance Indicators in Higher Education Institutions: A Comparative Analysis of International Reference Models

Time: Thursday 13 November, 12.00-12.45

Room: Room 236, 2nd floor, Building E

Presenters: Susana Lameiras, University of Minho

Chair: Eva Fernandez de Labastida

Abstract:

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are increasingly challenged to ensure agility and resilience in times of uncertainty, while maintaining strategic coherence and societal relevance. Quality assurance (QA) systems, particularly those supported by performance indicators, can play a decisive role in enabling institutions to align their internal practices

with external standards and emerging expectations.

This paper presents a comparative analysis of performance indicator frameworks, centred on the SMART-QUAL model and informed by three complementary academic approaches: Leiber (pedagogical depth), Bucur (research metrics), and Bruckmann (societal engagement). SMART-QUAL, developed through a European project involving 36 HEIs and QA agencies, proposes a structured system of 56 indicators, organised by the three institutional missions (teaching, research, and societal engagement), and distributed across 15 extended ESG areas. While SMART-QUAL is broad and integrative, it benefits from the thematic depth and specificity of the complementary models.

The paper aims to identify convergences and divergences between the ‘SMART-QUAL reference model’ and a national QA framework (the Portuguese QA standards and guidelines) and a European QA framework (the ESG).

When analysing the national QA framework and the ESG against our ‘reference model’, we observe that the first lacks coverage of applied research, stakeholder engagement, internationalisation, and sustainability. The ESG, although widely recognised and broadly applicable across European HEIs, primarily focuses on teaching and learning, and less on research and societal engagement. As such, for institutional quality development, HEIs would benefit from complementary models, like SMART-QUAL, to ensure full alignment with contemporary higher education missions.

This study demonstrates how the synthesis of different indicator frameworks offers a foundation for building adaptive and evidence-based QA systems that respond to institutional missions and strategic goals. Moreover, by aligning European and national frameworks with institutional practice, this study demonstrates how a comprehensive model can support the development of agile, mission-sensitive quality systems in HEIs.

PAPER 8: A thematic analysis of European Approach Joint Programme reviews

Time: Thursday 13 November, 12.00-12.45

Room: Room 238, 2nd floor, Building E

Presenters: Beate Treml, Austria’s Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD)

Chair: Patrick Van Den Bosch

Abstract:

The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes was approved by the ministers of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2015. Since then, research on its implementation has primarily focused on legal barriers and challenges posed by national external quality assurance (QA) practices. Case studies and examples of promising practice have provided valuable insights into the practical difficulties encountered by QA agencies and higher education institutions during external QA reviews conducted using the European Approach. However, comparatively little attention has been paid to the outcomes of these

reviews.

This paper seeks to address this gap by shifting the focus to the results of these evaluations. In the spirit of ESG 3.4 on thematic analysis, this study systematically compares reports available in English and listed as currently valid in June 2025 on the Database for External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR). The analysis is structured around the standards of the European Approach to identify recurring challenges that joint programmes face in their design, organisation, implementation, and quality assurance.

The aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive overview that supports higher education institutions already engaged in joint programmes or planning to launch them. Additionally, it offers insights that may inform the ongoing development of the European Degree (Label) and the revision of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

PAPER 9: Joint Efforts for Quality Enhancement: HAKA-NAQA Partnership to Support Ukrainian Universities through Institutional Accreditation

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Room 236, 2nd floor, Building E

Presenter: Nataliia Stukalo, National Agency for Higher Education QA, NAQA; Hillar Bauman, Estonian Quality Agency for Education; Nadiia Kovalchuk, Lutsk National Technical University

Chair: Ronny Heintze

Abstract:

This paper explores a practical case of international cooperation in quality assurance (QA), highlighting the collaboration between the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA) and the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance of Ukraine (NAQA). Initiated within the framework of a Memorandum of Cooperation signed in November 2023, this partnership addresses a pressing need: to develop and pilot an institutional accreditation model tailored to Ukraine's unique higher education context, especially under the strain of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war.

With over 500 higher education institutions and about 25,000 study programmes, Ukraine's QA system is heavily resource-intensive. Moving from programme-based to institutional accreditation offers a more sustainable and scalable solution. In response to NAQA's request in early 2024, HAKA supported the design of a new institutional accreditation framework, including the development of methodology, training for staff and experts, and a comprehensive pilot phase.

The initiative, funded by ESTDEV – the Estonian Centre for International Development Cooperation – includes pilot accreditations at three Ukrainian universities: Kyiv National

Economic University, Lutsk National Technical University, and the National University of Ostroh Academy. These pilots have involved co-led training, collaborative expert panel formation (with three experts each from Estonia and Ukraine), and hybrid-format site visits in May–June 2025. Evaluation decisions are expected by August 2025, with results to be shared during feedback seminars and at the Ukrainian Quality Assurance Forum UQAF-2025 in September 2025.

This joint presentation—featuring both QA agencies and a participating university—will offer multi-perspective insights on how international QA cooperation can drive policy innovation, reinforce institutional resilience, and foster trust across borders. It exemplifies how shared goals, transparency, and mutual learning can sustain and strengthen international academic partnerships even in times of crisis.

PAPER 10: Listening to the student voice: The strategic review of Ireland's survey of student engagement [StudentSurvey.ie](https://www.student-survey.ie)

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Room 238, 2nd floor, Building E

Presenter: Valerie Harvey, Higher Education Authority (HEA)

Chair: Liv Muth

Abstract:

StudentSurvey.ie (Irish Survey of Student Engagement) asks students about their understanding and experiences of engagement in higher education, including how their institutions provide opportunities and support for their academic, personal and social development. Undergraduates and taught postgraduates have participated in the online survey annually since 2013.

Over the last decade, StudentSurvey.ie has become an established part of higher education in Ireland with participating institutions making significant efforts to promote participation, analyse and interpret the resulting data, and act appropriately to enhance the quality of students' experiences. The results of StudentSurvey.ie demonstrate the value of student feedback in shaping, safeguarding and promoting shared values. The findings also highlight the need for student participation, including through evidence-building mechanisms such as national surveys, in governance and in both internal and external quality assurance processes (e.g. programmatic review).

Recognising that significant changes had occurred since 2013, a strategic review was undertaken by StudentSurvey.ie between 2022 and 2025. One of the aims of the review was to re-emphasise the central role of the student voice in how to enhance experiences of higher education. Enhancing effectiveness of quality assurance for the future of institutions cannot happen without the inclusion of the multiple perspectives of the most important player in the process – students.

During 2024 and 2025, a new survey instrument was developed that better captures the enablers and obstacles to student engagement. Higher education institution staff (including quality assurance, and teaching and learning offices), students' unions, national policy and quality agencies were key stakeholders in this process. The revised survey aims to respond to the transformative changes that have taken place in recent years in how students engage in learning.

The paper sets out the rationale for review, stakeholder involvement, the development of a revised survey, and opportunities and challenges that have arisen along the way.

PAPER 11: Crossing Borders, Crossing Lines? Navigating the Ethical Minefield of CBQA

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Room 330, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Ștefania-Maria Armășelu, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS); Lien Beyls, Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands, Flanders and Luxembourg (NVAO); Jennifer Osborne, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI); Emilia Primeri, National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR)

Chair: Anna Gover

Abstract:

Cross-Border Quality Assurance (CBQA) refers to external quality assurance (QA) activities conducted by a QA agency in a country other than its own (EUA, 2017). CBQA increasingly operates within a broader changing policy landscape shaped by internationalisation, digitalisation, and the marketisation of higher education. These dynamics pose multiple challenges: failures in governance, financial and risk management, leadership conduct, and quality assurance concerns (Sánchez-Chaparro et al., 2019; Prisacariu et al., 2016).

CBQA has gained relevance due to increased demand for higher education and internationalisation. Framed within a liberal market perspective, CBQA aims to increase transparency, institutional compatibility, and mobility by allowing institutions to choose the QA body that best fits their mission.

However, CBQA also raises significant ethical concerns, particularly around justice, equity, and transparency. Instead of fostering shared responsibility and implementing clear, accessible policies, QA processes could prioritise institutional diversity and stakeholder demands at the expense of national contexts and may not uphold its function as a tool for accountability and transparency (Trifiro, 2018, 2019; Carvalho et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2016). Knight (2002), in respect to this, highlights the following as the main CBQA ethical challenges: a) ensuring academic quality, b) avoiding “degree mills”, c) recognizing local sensitivities and relevance in QA procedures and d) addressing commercial motivations of QA providers.

This paper argues for the importance of framing the ethical dimensions of QA in cross-border contexts, particularly where cultural diversity and legal complexity may erode trust. It critiques the shift from education as a public good to a market-driven service. Drawing on survey data from a sample of European QA agencies, the paper identifies three core ethical values essential to CBQA: rootedness, empathy, and justice. It supports the idea that QA is not value-neutral, but shaped by leadership, institutional culture, policy clarity, stakeholder engagement, and resource availability.

Finally, the paper questions whether integrating internal and external QA systems within standardised international frameworks (e.g., ISO, ICE, CEN, ESG) can genuinely enhance global alignment in educational quality.

PAPER 12: Agility and independence based on the challenges of the PKA Polish Accreditation Committee

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Room 332, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Jakub Brdulak, Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA) and Natalia Wiktorja Greniewska, Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA)

Chair: Bryan Maguire

Abstract:

Agility, understood as the capacity to respond swiftly to change and adapt to evolving stakeholder expectations, is increasingly regarded as a crucial operational objective for quality assurance agencies. The need for agility is especially acute in the current environment, marked by internationalisation (including cross-border education), the expansion of online teaching and learning, the rapid development of AI tools, and mounting concerns over democratic values. Although the literature thoroughly explores the factors underpinning agility in higher education, it is acknowledged that agile decision-making relies on minimising organisational interdependencies and establishing clear lines of authority and responsibility.

In accordance with ESG Standard 3.3, agencies are required to operate independently and autonomously, assuming full responsibility for their activities and outcomes without external interference. The authors argue that adherence to this standard is essential for cultivating agility within quality assurance agencies. Using the Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA) as a case study, this paper investigates challenges related to organisational decision-making, highlighting how the PKA's lack of legal personality and dedicated resources limits its control over key operational matters, such as the evaluation process based on the European Approach.

This article discusses potential reforms to uphold academic standards and guarantee the delivery of high-quality education and research during periods of disruption. It examines which legal and organisational instruments might enhance the responsiveness of quality

assurance agencies to global challenges, thereby fostering resilience and adaptability within the HE sector and stimulating significant innovation and transformation. Drawing on the case of the PKA, the paper also explores the reforms necessary to institutionalise these advances, ensuring that quality assurance agencies remain agile in meeting future uncertainties. The PKA's experience is intended to prompt dialogue among quality assurance bodies across the EHEA.

PAPER 13: Policy and Practice Gaps in Quality in Times of Disruption: A Case of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Room 3001, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Derrick Zitha, University of the Witwatersrand

Chair: Luis Miranda

Abstract:

The quality assurance processes and procedures in higher education have evolved over time in response to institutional, national, and global challenges such as climate change, ongoing violent conflicts, and health pandemics. These global changes require a new perspective and innovative solutions that acknowledge the many disruptions that compromise the goal of equitable and excellent education for all. To effectively address these challenges, it is crucial to adopt a balanced approach, maintaining quality of provision while taking into account the specific contexts and circumstances in which these disruptions occur.

The Covid-19 pandemic has in many ways disrupted how institutions of higher education manage and sustain the quality of their academic offerings. In many instances, teaching, learning, and assessment methods have evolved to match the new modes of provision. Unfortunately, in some cases, the policy environment has not kept pace with the rapidly evolving teaching, learning, and assessment practices at the institutional and national levels. In light of many disruptions, it is crucial for higher education to establish a proactive, adaptive, and responsive policy framework capable of accurately predicting future trends. It is imperative to successfully tackle the issues and uphold the quality of education without any notable adverse consequences. Amidst the current volatile global transformations, it is imperative for higher education institutions to devise novel and inventive tactics to effectively address the disruptions of an uncertain future through research and innovation.

In this chapter, we reflect on how higher education institutions such as the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) responded to the disruptions and explore some of the policy and practice gaps and their implication for quality in higher education in South Africa.

Keywords: Policy, Practice, Teaching Disruption, Higher Education, Quality in Education

PAPER 14: Strengthening Integrity: Austria's Strategic Approach to Proactive Quality Assurance

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Room 3005, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Ulrike Najar, Austrian quality assurance agency (AQ Austria)

Chair: Ana Gvritishvili

Abstract:

Since the implementation of the Austrian Higher Education Law Package 2024, scientific and artistic integrity has become a central theme of quality assurance for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Austria. Recent amendments to the Higher Education Quality Assurance Act (HS-QSG) introduce a systematic approach that encompasses the entire higher education landscape, including the artistic sector. This paper discusses the process and outcomes of this policy approach for proactive quality assurance, which is deeply rooted in the European understanding of academic integrity as a fundamental value crucial for public trust and the global standing of HEIs as ethical institutions.

Specifically, the paper outlines Austria's quality assurance initiative to promote a "culture of scientific and artistic rectitude and quality" that goes beyond basic "good scientific practice." This move towards establishing holistic and preventative quality assurance mechanisms aims to position academic integrity as a strategic asset for both the higher education sector and individual HEIs. Practical support measures and stakeholder processes are discussed based on a survey conducted with all Austrian HEIs in early 2025. This survey's findings will highlight the institutions' own outlined scientific and artistic integrity governance structures and initiatives as well as challenges and opportunities.

Building on these insights, the discussion centres on the argument that systematically integrating scientific and artistic integrity into quality assurance frameworks is essential for strengthening institutional resilience and progressive policies in challenging times. When leveraged strategically, quality assurance can protect academic freedom and critical inquiry, ensuring an environment conducive to robust academic work and diverse perspectives. This case study offers transferable lessons on how quality assurance can be used to proactively strengthen institutional rigour and ethical governance in challenging times.

PAPER 15: The impact of student partnership – how embedding student partnership in the Scottish Tertiary Enhancement Framework is supporting responsiveness and resilience at an institutional and national level in Scotland

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Room I, ground floor, Building E

Presenter: Debra Macfarlane, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Chair: Gaga Gvenetadze

Abstract:

The Scottish Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) ensures the student learning experience is at the heart of all self-evaluative and enhancement activity and has embedded student partnership into all its quality mechanisms. We have investigated the impact of the TQEF on the student experience during the first year and half of this approach and identified how this has supported institutional resilience by enabling institutions to respond to new challenges from the student body. We have also identified how this approach has fed into our national programme of enhancement activity, ensuring this programme is addressing current challenges, learning from experiences of students across the sector and focussed on the student journey.

The paper describes how students are partners in the TQEF, including their role in institutional self-evaluation and enhancement planning, annual reporting, external and internal review and the national enhancement programme, focussing on how this partnership has been a key element in the design process. It also describes the two key reference points – the Student Learning Experience model and Scotland’s Ambition for Student Partnership – and their role in underpinning the framework and supporting institutional resilience. It explores the work to develop three interrelated lenses that were identified by students – Mental Health and Wellbeing; Equality Diversity and Inclusion; and Education for Sustainable Development – which operate as underlying themes for the student experience that have been integrated into the quality framework. Importantly, the paper goes on to identify early examples of how this approach is having an impact from a college, university, agency and student perspective, concluding that student partnership is an essential component of a resilient tertiary education sector and identifying key principles for embedding this partnership effectively.

PAPER 16: Quality Assurance as a Catalyst for Institutional Policy Reform in Times of Crisis

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Room II, ground floor, Building E

Presenters: Justyna Smoleń, Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA)

Chair: Patrick Van Den Bosch

Abstract:

Crises often act as accelerators of change. This paper examines how quality assurance (QA) mechanisms have been leveraged not only to maintain academic standards but also to catalyse broader policy reforms at the institutional level.

We explore the case of a national university that overhauled its governance and learning outcomes frameworks following two concurrent disruptions: a national political crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. QA teams used these disruptions to initiate conversations about academic integrity, student-centred learning, and institutional transparency, framing reform through internal quality dialogues and peer-led reviews.

The paper discusses how QA's role shifted from oversight to facilitation, enabling shared ownership of change. While short-term decisions were driven by necessity, long-term institutional policy reform was guided by QA processes that emphasised reflection, stakeholder inclusion, and responsiveness.

This case provides a replicable model for QA units seeking to use crisis moments as windows of opportunity for structural reform rather than reactive damage control.

PAPER 17: Complex Dynamic of Student Integration in QA: Innovative Insights from Top Management in Turkish Higher Education

Time: Friday 14 November, 09.30-10.15

Room: Room 236, 2nd floor, Building E

Presenters: Eren Çanga, Padova University

Chair: Katarzyna Gajda

Abstract:

Student participation in internal quality assurance processes is a cornerstone of inclusive and effective governance in higher education. Yet, during periods of institutional or systemic crisis, the degree to which student voices are meaningfully integrated can fluctuate significantly. This paper explores how top-level university management in Turkey perceive and manage student integration in QA under challenging conditions such as financial instability disruptions to academic mobility, and global and regional crises.

This paper utilises structured interviews with over ten vice rectors and QA coordinators across a diverse range of Turkish higher education institutions. The aim is to qualitatively investigate the institutional logic, policy adaptations, and perceived barriers to maintaining meaningful student involvement in QA during times of stress. Interview questions target multiple dimensions of integration—including representation, participatory decision-making, and feedback mechanisms—while also capturing reflections on how past crises have reshaped current practices. Since both crisis management and student integration are closely tied to management decisions, our interviews are created to highlight the intricacies of those processes.

By focusing on a single-country case study with institutional diversity (public/private, research/teaching-oriented), the study highlights patterns that may be transferable to other contexts within the European Higher Education Area. It also offers insights into how QA structures can be designed to preserve inclusive governance, even when institutional

autonomy is under external pressure due to the above-mentioned crises.

This paper primarily addresses the sub-topic “Proactive QA in challenging times”, while also drawing on themes from “Agility of QA: lessons learnt from past crises” as it is a qualitative deep-dive. The findings aim to inform QA policy and practice by offering practical reflections from those most responsible for steering quality strategies during disruption.

PAPER 18: Higher Education as Refuge: Georgia’s Response to National and Foreign Refugee Crisis

Time: Friday 14 November, 09.30-10.15

Room: Room 238, 2nd floor, Building E

Presenter: Ana Kamladze and Mariam Kurtanidze, National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE, Georgia)

Chair: Sylvie Navarre

Abstract:

This paper explores Georgia’s approach to the recognition of educational qualifications for refugees, particularly those from Georgia’s own occupied regions, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, as well as from Ukraine.

In the case of Georgian territories affected by occupation, it was crucial to ensure procedural justice and equity. Within the framework of crisis responsiveness Georgia established a legal framework to recognise education obtained in these occupied territories, allowing fair recognition procedures by acknowledging the frequent unavailability of archival records. These regulations have been revised multiple times based on analysis of practical experience.

Under Georgian legislation, documents issued by self-proclaimed republics are not legally valid. Individuals must replace such documents with official Georgian state documents. The same principle applies to documents from other self-proclaimed territories — validity is granted only when documents are officially replaced in accordance with the host country’s format.

Since 2022, refugees from Ukraine have comprised the majority of education recognition applications in Georgia. Given the urgency and volume of requests, flexibility became essential. A major challenge was verifying the authenticity of documents, as many Ukrainian applicants were unable to obtain or present original documents as they were fleeing their country. To address this, Georgia allowed educational documentation retrieved from Ukraine’s Unified State Electronic Database on Education (EDBO) to be accepted as valid under force majeure conditions, without requiring apostille or legalisation. Without this adaptation, Ukrainian refugees’ access to education would have been significantly delayed.

Furthermore, Georgia introduced legislative changes to create a clear formal procedure for

recognising education received by individuals with international protection status who are unable to submit documents evidencing education. This ensured a more transparent and fair process.

Georgia's approach serves as a secure pathway for refugees to uphold the right to education and demonstrates the critical importance and effectiveness of adaptable recognition mechanisms in an increasingly internationalised context.

PAPER 19: Implementation of Virtual Objective Structured Clinical Examination at Tbilisi State Medical University

Time: Friday 14 November, 09.30-10.15

Room: Room 330, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenters: Khatuna Todadze, Tbilisi State Medical University

Chair: Eva Fernandez de Labastida

Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a rapid transformation in medical education, pushing institutions to adopt digital tools not only for teaching but also for high-stakes clinical assessments. Electronic or Virtual Objective Structured Clinical Examination (vOSCE) can provide a valuable alternative to face-to-face Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) and has been accepted among medical students and examiners since the COVID pandemic. The development of appropriate quality assurance (QA) systems will serve as essential mechanisms to uphold educational standards and foster institutional resilience. At Tbilisi State Medical University (TSMU), the QA department plays a key role in supporting innovative, evidence-informed responses to challenges through the structured evaluation of digital assessment initiatives. As a valuable alternative to face-to-face OSCE, TSMU is implementing a vOSCE as the final exam in obstetrics and gynaecology, as well as paediatrics, for seventh- and eighth-semester students. This digital assessment, delivered via Moodle, focuses on evaluating analytical and clinical reasoning skills. To complement this, a mini-OSCE will be implemented during formative assessments to address hands-on skill gaps within the 60-point internal evaluation system. The QA department assessing the educational effectiveness and stakeholder experience of this hybrid model. Structured questionnaires, rating scales, and online assessment forms will be developed and administered to both students and faculty. Video recording and review will be used for post-exam auditing, calibration, and feedback.

Initial findings show that vOSCE successfully measures students' analytical and decision-making competencies, but falls short in assessing practical skills. Insights from QA-led evaluations will be used to refine digital assessment strategies and support the university in planning future developments. Take Home Messages:

- QA can guide the responsible integration of digital learning and assessment tools in

medical education.

- QA offers an effective interim solution for assessing clinical reasoning but cannot replace hands-on clinical assessment.
- Blended assessment models and prompt QA processes are critical for maintaining educational integrity and preparing for future developments.

PAPER 20: Quality Assurance of Student Blended Mobility

Time: Friday 14 November, 09.30-10.15

Room: Room 332, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Mark Frederiks, Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)

Chair: Anca Prisacariu

Abstract:

Higher education institutions are increasingly integrating Student Blended Mobility (SBM) as part of their internationalisation efforts, combining physical and virtual learning to enhance accessibility and inclusivity and provide alternative mobility formats for their students. Blended mobility started mainly as a quick solution during the COVID-19 crisis but is now becoming a more permanent part of international student mobility, also assisted by the implementation of such innovative models in European universities. However, institutions are facing challenges in quality assurance (QA), institutional support, and student engagement. The EU-funded Fostering High-Quality Blended Student Mobility in Higher Education (HIBLend) project aims to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive framework to support institutions in effectively designing, implementing, and evaluating SBM activities. Surveys, interviews and discussion rounds and validation sessions have been set up by the HIBLend project partners to explore and address the relevant quality issues with students, teachers, institutional administrations, support staff, SBM experts, QA and funding agencies. The main project results related to QA are presented in this paper which starts with summarising the current landscape of SBM, the key trends, participation rates, and institutional perspectives in terms of implementation and uptake. Next, the ESG that apply to SBM are highlighted and the resulting HIBLend quality framework is presented. The HIBLend framework serves as a practical guide for higher education institutions, ensuring that SBM initiatives are well-structured, effectively managed, and aligned with international quality standards. This framework has been piloted with institutions and is supported by a checklist of actionable items institutions can follow regarding the strategy, design, implementation and internal evaluation of SBM. Special attention is given to the project recommendations on how QA agencies can assist with supporting high quality SBM. The paper concludes with a reflection on how QA supports this shift—from emergency response to lasting practice—by helping institutions ensure quality in new mobility formats.

PAPER 21: Anticipating Change: Designing AI-Ready QA Systems for Future-Proof Universities

Time: Friday 14 November, 10.30-11.15

Room: Room 236, 2nd floor, Building E

Presenter: Tea Imedadze, East European University

Chair: Jakub Grodecki

Abstract:

As digital transformation accelerates, quality assurance (QA) must evolve from a reactive function to a proactive system capable of guiding institutions through AI-driven disruption. This paper explores how QA frameworks can shape the future of higher education by ensuring that AI technologies enhance rather than erode academic quality, learning equity, and institutional trust.

We present a European-wide landscape of emerging QA practices related to AI integration and introduce a pilot case study from a Georgian university deploying AI-powered tools in QA processes. These include automated student feedback analysis, curriculum relevance mapping using machine learning, and detection of bias in digital assessments. The case is analysed through the lens of ethics, transferability, and long-term institutional sustainability.

The paper proposes a draft framework of “AI-readiness indicators” for QA systems that can be adapted across national contexts. These indicators address algorithmic transparency, academic oversight, participatory QA mechanisms, and digital inclusion.

By combining policy insight and field-level experimentation, the session aims to equip participants with strategic tools to navigate digital disruption while preserving academic integrity. The discussion invites QA professionals and institutional leaders to reflect on how QA can evolve into a forward-looking, ethical, and resilient compass in the AI era.

PAPER 22: Beyond Compatibility: Quality Assurance for Fostering Convergence in European Universities Alliances

Time: Friday 14 November, 10.30-11.15

Room: Room 238, 2nd floor, Building E

Presenter: Timothée Toury, European University of Technology Alliance

Chair: Daniela Craciun

Abstract:

European University Alliances are poised to play a key role in shaping the future of European higher education, even as the concept of a “European University” continues to evolve. As a working hypothesis, we propose that such alliances differ from simple universities networks in that they are structured around a common engagement in quality assurance (QA) on their explicit objective of integrating and transforming their academic missions. This is particularly relevant for Eut+, whose rectors have formally endorsed the goal of an eventual merger.

This contribution reflects on the meaning and implementation of QA at the alliance level, drawing on insights from previous projects (including EUniQ) and initial internal experimentation within Eut+.

First, we propose a methodological framework that recognises the experimental and diverse nature of alliances, distinguishing two key QA dimensions, independently addressed:

- (1) The strategic relevance of the alliance’s plan and its implementation plan assessed in relation to members’ strengths and environments;
- (2) The effectiveness of its implementation plan execution, evaluated through tangible outcomes, institutional uptake, and progress on the implementation plan.

Conflating these dimensions risks undermining bold strategies, misaligning KPIs, and distorting resource allocation.

Then, as an application case study, the paper presents the Eut+ Standards and Guidelines for Harmonization (SGH), a methodology for guiding and monitoring the implementation of the Alliance’s Mission Statement and strategic goals across member universities. Inspired by the EHEA ESG, the ten SGH reflect Eut+’s ambition to become an integrated international super-campus while respecting institutional diversity. Though not exhaustive or fully independent, the standards address core missions and systemic transformation. Self-assessment reports reveal varying levels of adoption but strong overall commitment. Members welcomed the approach and recognised the need for a strategic alignment. Interviews and focus groups with representatives from other alliances confirmed the framework’s relevance and potential for adaptation to diverse alliance contexts.

PAPER 23: Redefining "Proactive QA" in the AI Era: a student-driven policy model within international AI Governance frameworks

Time: Friday 14 November, 10.30-11.15

Room: Room 330, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Stanisław Zabandzała, University of Warsaw

Chair: Luis Miranda

Abstract:

The proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) across higher education systems presents new challenges and opportunities for quality assurance (QA), calling for more anticipatory,

inclusive, and adaptive approaches. This paper examines the integration of AI governance into QA mechanisms through a comparative analysis of institutional policies, with particular attention to stakeholder engagement, academic integrity, and policy coherence within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The core of the study is a multi-institutional review of AI-related frameworks adopted by European universities, identifying common regulatory patterns such as the requirement for disclosure of AI-generated content, restrictions on AI use in student assessment, the emergence of dedicated oversight bodies, and the varying degrees of involvement of academic staff and students in policy formation. The analysis reveals both innovation and fragmentation in current practices, highlighting the need for more harmonised and student-inclusive models of governance.

Within this broader landscape, the paper presents a detailed case study of the University of Warsaw. In September 2023, the Student Parliament initiated and adopted a resolution on the responsible use of AI in education, which subsequently formed the basis of a university-wide policy officially adopted by the University Council. This instance of student-led governance not only underscores the potential of learners as co-creators of QA frameworks but also exemplifies proactive institutional adaptation. The policy is now undergoing formal review, further reflecting a dynamic QA process.

The case has gained international visibility through its discussion during a 4EU+ Alliance student conference, illustrating its potential for cross-border learning and transferability.

The paper concludes with recommendations for embedding AI governance within QA systems through participatory design, digital oversight tools, and multi-level engagement, thereby strengthening institutional resilience and academic values in the face of rapid technological transformation.

PAPER 24: Quality Without Borders: Sustaining Joint Degrees Through Collaborative Assurance

Time: Friday 14 November, 10.30-11.15

Room: Room 332, 3rd floor, Building E

Presenter: Rima Isaifan, National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation/ Ministry of Education & Higher Education, Qatar

Chair: Michael Hofer

Abstract:

In an increasingly interconnected yet unstable global landscape, multi-national joint degrees have become powerful tools for advancing academic mobility, mutual understanding, and strategic cooperation. However, these programmes face significant quality assurance (QA) challenges, ranging from regulatory misalignments and procedural inconsistencies to cultural and institutional contexts. This paper proposes a practical QA framework to support

the design, implementation, and sustainability of joint degrees across borders. Drawing on case studies from EU–MENA and EU–Asia collaborations, it identifies key obstacles and introduces a comprehensive model that spans both external and internal QA pillars. The model relies on five pillars: mutual recognition of accreditation standards, collaborative or joint accreditation visits, collaborative curriculum design, shared assessment and evaluation tools, and a cross-border steering committee. The framework is supported by innovation enablers such as digital QA platforms, hybrid site evaluations, and mechanisms for student voice integration. These elements help institutions navigate diverging national systems while maintaining academic integrity and fostering trust. The framework is not a one-size-fits-all model, but a flexible, transferable blueprint adaptable to diverse legal, political, and cultural settings. The paper concludes with reflective questions and recommendations for policy and practice, including calls for formalised cross-border QA agreements, digital tool investment, and student-centred design. Ultimately, this work positions QA as a catalyst for innovation and resilience in global higher education rather than a bureaucratic barrier. It aims to engage QA practitioners, institutional leaders, and policymakers in a forward-looking conversation about sustaining international cooperation through QA in joint degree programmes.

Poster Presentations:

POSTER PRESENTATION 1: Quality Assurance as a Foundation for Creating Learning Experiences and Strengthening International Cooperation and Mobility

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Corridor, Building E

Presenter: Anna Beitane, University of Tartu

Abstract:

Increasing international student mobility is one of the University of Tartu's strategic priorities for the 2026–2035 period. Despite the institutional efforts, the mobility rate of students remains relatively low, with only 5.2% participation. Some of the key barriers to mobility include rigid academic schedules, limited flexibility, and insufficient awareness of opportunities.

According to OECD Skills Outlook, international mobility is crucial for developing intercultural competences. In our poster presentation, we would like to showcase practical case studies of international collaboration and the joint co-design process in the creation of study activities, including student exchanges and mobilities. The following case studies embed the Quality Assurance (QA) Framework based on the E-course Quality Mark process, developed by the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA). This framework ensures high standards in course design, learning outcomes, assessment clarity, and student-approaches, which lead to positive experiences and feedback from students during mobility.

POSTER PRESENTATION 2: Chronopolitics of Quality Assurance: gatekeeping or joint action? Time as a Strategic Resource (Case study of system accreditation in Germany 2018-2024)

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Corridor, Building E

Presenter: Sofia Treskova, Accreditation, Certification, and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN)

Abstract:

This poster presents findings from a study applying a chronopolitical lens to system accreditation procedures in Germany (2018–2024) under the 2017 legal framework. It explores how time is allocated and used as a strategic resource in the cooperation between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and external quality assurance (QA) actors. Based on 59 accreditation cases and 200 conditions, the study shows that 45% of conditions were fulfilled before the final decision, demonstrating the framework’s capacity to support improvement through multi-stage follow-up and joint action. The findings highlight how the framework fosters trust by enabling dialogue, transparency, and shared responsibility between internal and external QA. By focusing on time as a shared resource, the study illustrates how QA can be proactive in addressing institutional challenges and supporting continuous quality development. The poster contributes to the discussion on how QA frameworks can be designed to support institutional autonomy, resilience and continuous improvement.

POSTER PRESENTATION 3: Agile Assurance: Balancing Autonomy and Accountability in QA

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Corridor, Building E

Presenter: Gemma Long, Transnational Education (TNE)

Abstract:

In times of crisis, quality assurance (QA) systems must remain both stable and adaptable.

This poster explores how a principles-based and risk-based regulatory approach can support institutional autonomy, innovation, and resilience.

Rather than prescribing rules, this model allows for diverse practices while maintaining accountability, enabling higher education institutions to respond flexibly to disruption.

Drawing on comparative data from the EUA’s University Autonomy Scorecard, the poster invites discussion on how such approaches might be adapted or adopted in other national contexts.

Participants are encouraged to reflect on the balance between regulatory oversight and

institutional freedom, and how QA systems can evolve to support both stability and transformation.

POSTER PRESENTATION 4: DIVERSE European University Alliance's Approach to Micro-Credentials

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Corridor, Building E

Presenter: Ana Tecilazić, Algebra Bernays University

Abstract:

The poster presents the DIVERSE European University Alliance's Approach to Micro-Credentials. The DIVERSE European University Alliance, consisting of 12 HEIs in 11 countries, is committed to supporting the development of the European economy of tomorrow by combining education, research and cooperation with businesses and civil society in general. Part of the Alliance's strategy for the shared development and delivery of high-quality accredited education programmes linking research and innovation and society at large, which goes beyond the existing cooperation, is the creation of joint micro-programmes. These lead to the attainment of micro-credentials, which also form a key component of the DIVERSE broader lifelong strategy. Rooted in a well-structured QA framework, ensuring consistent academic quality through shared QA processes, the initiative of creating numerous joint micro-credentials provides a strategic response to global challenges affecting academic mobility and cooperation. It fosters trust in institutions, pedagogical innovation and alignment with learner and labour market needs.

POSTER PRESENTATION 5: Exploring Quality Labels in Higher Education: A Tool for Fostering Trust and International Collaboration?

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Corridor, Building E

Presenter: Giorgi Munjishvili, European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)

Abstract:

In higher education, quality labels are typically used to demonstrate adherence to a certain set of internationally recognised standards, and, in some cases, demonstrate excellence in particular areas (e.g. research, sustainability, etc.). They are perceived as a sign of trust and a tool that enhances transparency for stakeholders, supporting institutions in establishing their credibility and positioning themselves internationally.

The poster presents findings from the feasibility study of setting up a new type of a quality label, conducted within the IMINQA project, which provided an overview of quality labels that follow the ESG-aligned methodologies. The poster is therefore exploratory in nature

and aims to initiate discussions with stakeholders on the value of quality labels as a tool for higher education institutions to further their internationalisation goals. In this way, the poster aims to explore how non-obligatory external quality assurance can contribute to internationalisation efforts and sustaining or intensifying international cooperation.

POSTER PRESENTATION 6: Which indicators can help make quality understood? Insights from the QualityLink project

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Corridor, Building E

Presenter: Colin Tück, Knowledge Innovation Centre (KIC)

Abstract:

The QualityLink project has been developing proposals for an interoperable data ecosystem on micro-credentials and courses. Higher education institutions would make available basic data on their learning opportunities, enriched with quality indicators – provided by providers themselves or others. The project identified over 20 possible quality indicators in five quality domains. Learners and other stakeholders have been surveyed to learn which indicators are most relevant.

The poster presents insights from the stakeholder surveys. It is interactive and invites participants to add their thoughts by sticking post-its onto it, commenting on the relevance of different indicators. Especially higher education institutions and quality assurance (QA) agencies are also invited to comment on which indicators they have data readily available.

NB: Survey results are illustrative for now. The poster is a draft outline; a professionally designed version would be produced for the event.

POSTER PRESENTATION 7: Building Institutional Resilience through Participatory Quality Assurance

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Corridor, Building E

Presenter: Szilvia Besze, Tempus Public Foundation

Abstract:

The Continuous Development Cycle (CDC) is a stakeholder-driven quality enhancement model developed within the PROFFORMANCE initiative to support teaching performance development in higher education. Rooted in enhancement-led QA, participatory feedback culture and organisational learning theory, the CDC reflects ESG 2015 principles, particularly stakeholder involvement, autonomy and continuous improvement.

The cycle consists of four stages: goal setting, assessment, support and follow-up. It

incorporates feedback from self, peers and students, forming a three-dimensional evidence base that fosters constructive dialogue and inclusive decision-making.

This poster visually presents the CDC model and its core components: a performance assessment tool, a good practice database and short courses. It illustrates how the CDC strengthens institutional resilience and supports international collaboration in teaching enhancement. The model will be applied in an international professional network, providing a transferable framework for inclusive, transparent and adaptive quality development.

POSTER PRESENTATION 8: Quality Assurance in Language Learning: Ensuring Sustainable International Cooperation in Higher Education

Time: Thursday 13 November, 14.15-15.00

Room: Corridor, Building E

Presenter: Katarzyna Gajda, University of Warsaw

Abstract:

This poster explores the role of quality assurance (QA) in sustaining international cooperation in higher education, with a focus on language education at the University of Warsaw. QA systems are essential for ensuring high standards of teaching, fostering trust between institutions, and supporting academic mobility. By adhering to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the University of Warsaw guarantees equitable language education for international students. The poster highlights the university's innovative System of Language Provision (USLP), which offers 41 languages and aligns with the 4EU+ Alliance's shared QA policies. Through continuous assessment, feedback, and collaboration, the university ensures that language education contributes to the sustainability of exchange programmes, joint degrees, and broader internationalisation efforts within higher education.
