



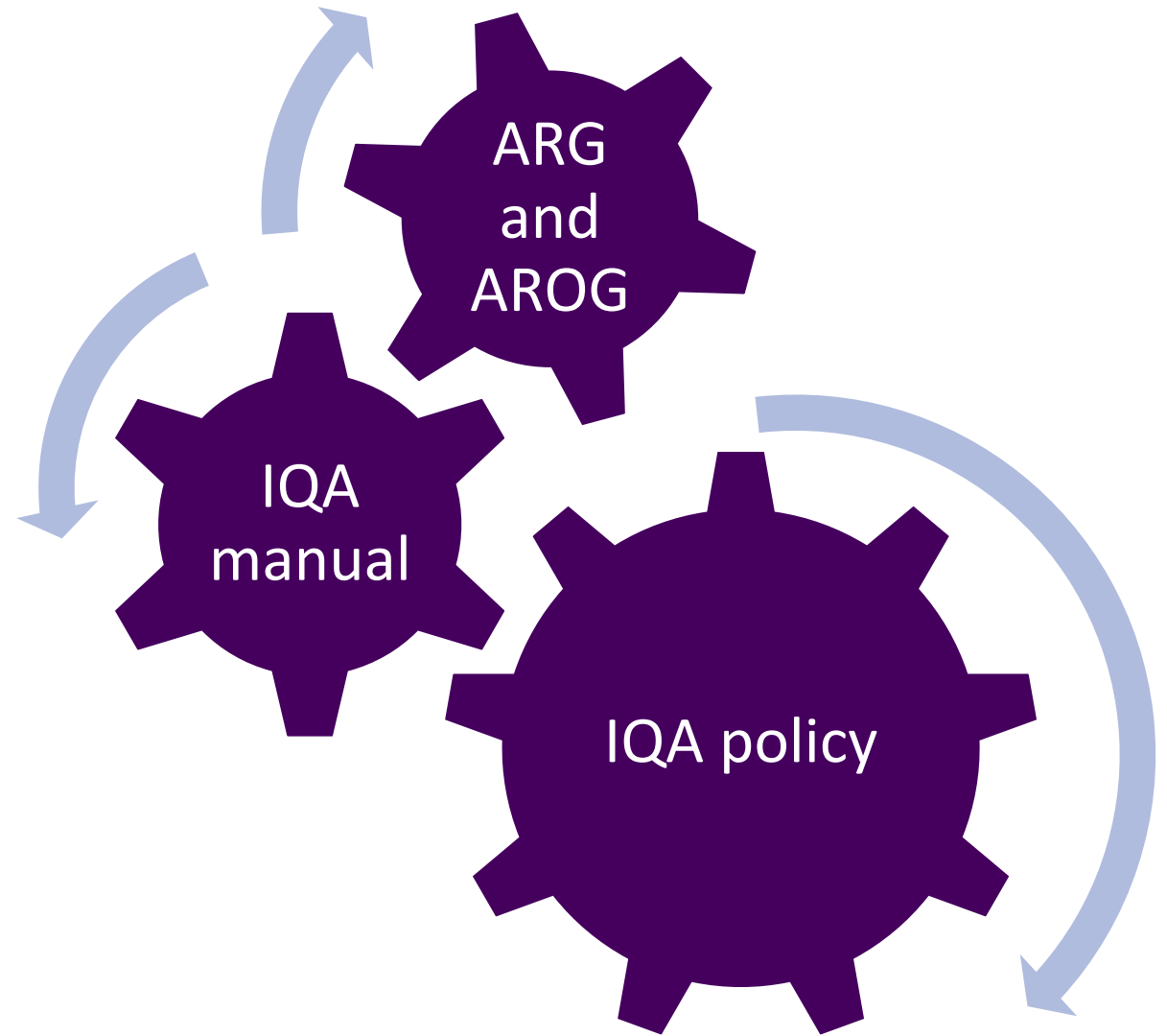
Approach to Internal Quality Assurance

Presentation by Laura Porter,
Quality Enhancement Manager





Internal Quality Assurance





IQA Policy

Our IQA policy is published on our website and sets out:

- Our commitment to IQA and what that entails
- Leadership support for internal quality assurance
- Operational approach to IQA





IQA manual

The manual seeks to help QAA staff to understand the QAA approach to external quality assurance and to support their development as quality professionals. It is designed as a reference document, providing information when staff need it.

Part 1

- Sets out the principles and context of internal quality assurance at QAA

Part 2

- Sets out core policy statements and guidance with the 'Method design checklist' detailing the expectations for the design of review methods

Part 3

- Is a series of appendices representing models of practice, additional guidance and examples

Part 4

- Provides additional information on specific types of review



Method design checklist

- The method design checklist sets out the requirements for all QAA review methods
- It is aligned to the ESG in order to retain QAA's EQAR registration and a table is included within the Manual mapping each item to the relevant part(s) of the ESG.
- This is a central reference point in all QAA review method design.

List of method design expectations

1. Methods are designed to test provision against agreed and specified external reference points
2. Methods are designed in consultation with stakeholders
3. Method handbooks are published and cover agreed content
4. Supplementary guidance for methods may be produced and published; operational guidance will be produced
5. Methods are based on self-evaluation by the provider
6. Methods are based on a clear evidence and information base
7. Reviews are conducted and assessments made by peer reviewers (including student reviewers)
8. Reviews are managed by a QAA Officer
9. Reviews involve meetings with staff and with students
10. Students and the student experience are a key focus
11. Reviews are evidence-based assessments
12. Outcomes, judgements and findings are clearly set out within each method
13. The quality and consistency of reports is assured including through moderation
14. Methods are operated to a high professional standard and operated consistently
15. Review reports are published
16. Reviews are followed up
17. The duration of a review outcome is clearly specified
18. There is an appeal process against review judgements/conclusions
19. Providers may make a complaint
20. The external quality assurance system is designed to drive improvement/enhancement and continuing development
21. Thematic analysis is used to optimise the benefits of what is learnt from external quality assurance activity
22. External quality assurance methods are evaluated and revised to remain responsive, valued and effective
23. The method handbook includes QAA's standard statement on EHEA values, the ESG and other Bologna tools and approaches.



Questions for discussion:

- How does this approach to internal QA align/differ from approaches within your agency(ies)?
- What are the fundamental design expectations for review methods overseen by your agency(ies)?
- How do your agency(ies) evaluate the effectiveness of your approaches to quality review?





Policy statements

Policy statements within the manual provide considerations for certain aspects of review. This includes:

- Outcomes, judgements and findings
- Roles and responsibilities of QAA officers
- Emergency and contingency planning
- Monitoring and evaluation of review methods
- Thematic Analysis
- Equality, diversity and inclusion in reviews





ENQA Review 2023

ESG 3.6 The panel commends the agency for its comprehensive IQA manual, which serves as a great reservoir of internal knowledge and regulates a vast array of issues and processes.





Experience of ENQA review

Alastair Delaney, Deputy CEO
Laura Porter, Quality
Enhancement Manager





- **Our approach**
- **Our challenges**
- **Our opportunities and learning**





Our approach

Governance and process
stages





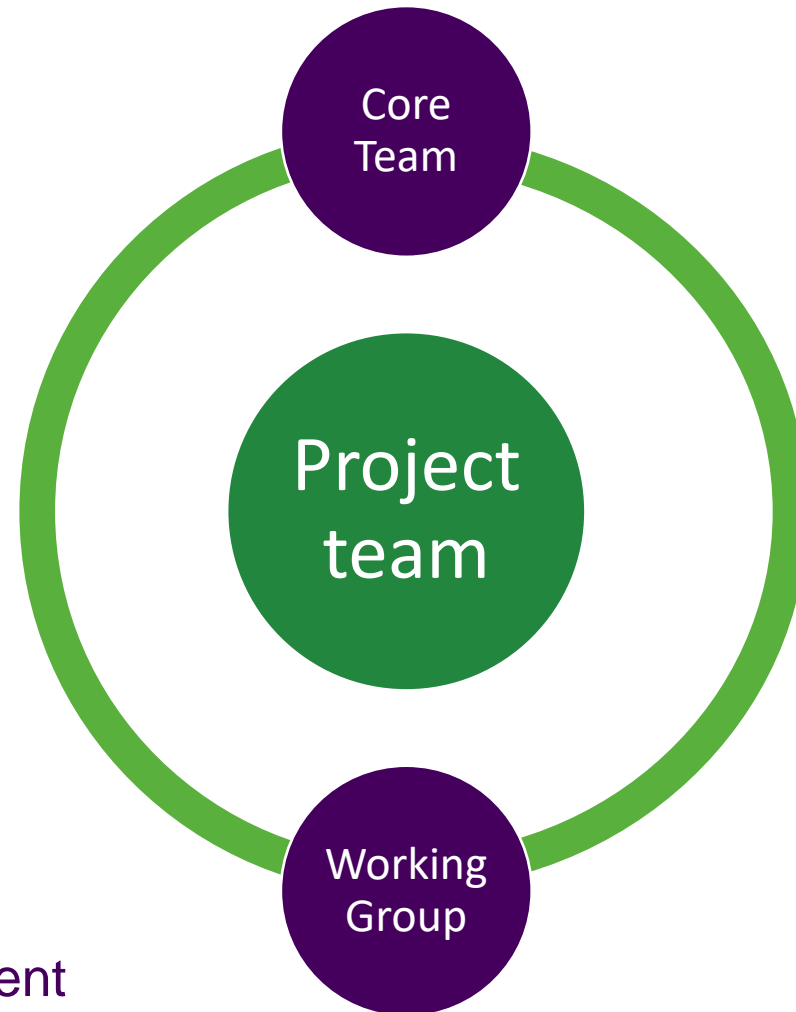
Governance and project management

Governance

- Project team
- Core team
- Working Group
- QAA Board

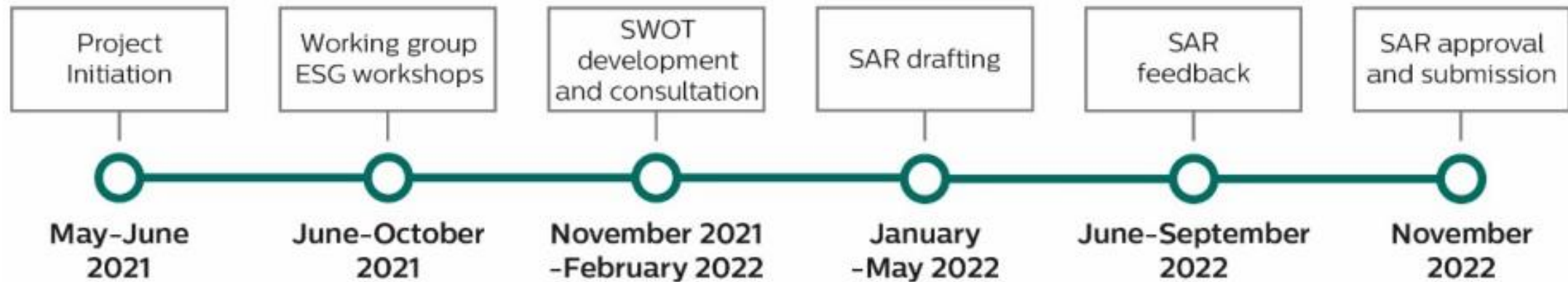
Project Management

- Project Initiation Document
- Project Plan
- Regular reporting





Process stages





Our challenges

Change and complexity

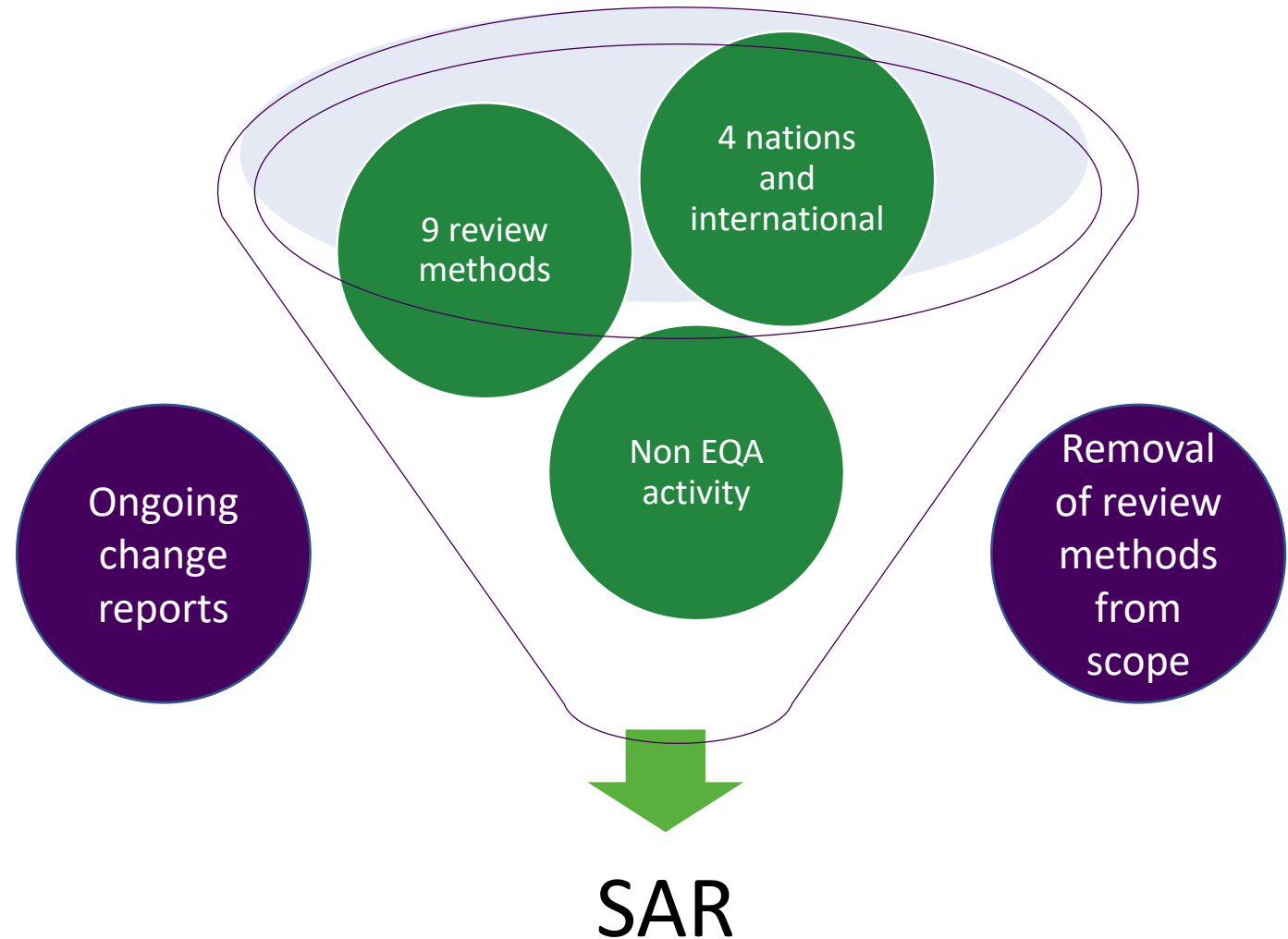




Change and complexity

‘QAA have been operating under circumstances where change is the only constant for quite some time now. ‘

2023 ENQA review report





Our learning

Modelling a review
approach and embedding
ESG





Modelling a review approach

- Our approach to self evaluation
- Our approach to briefings and stakeholder engagement
- Feedback from our stakeholders
- Responsiveness and learning from a review

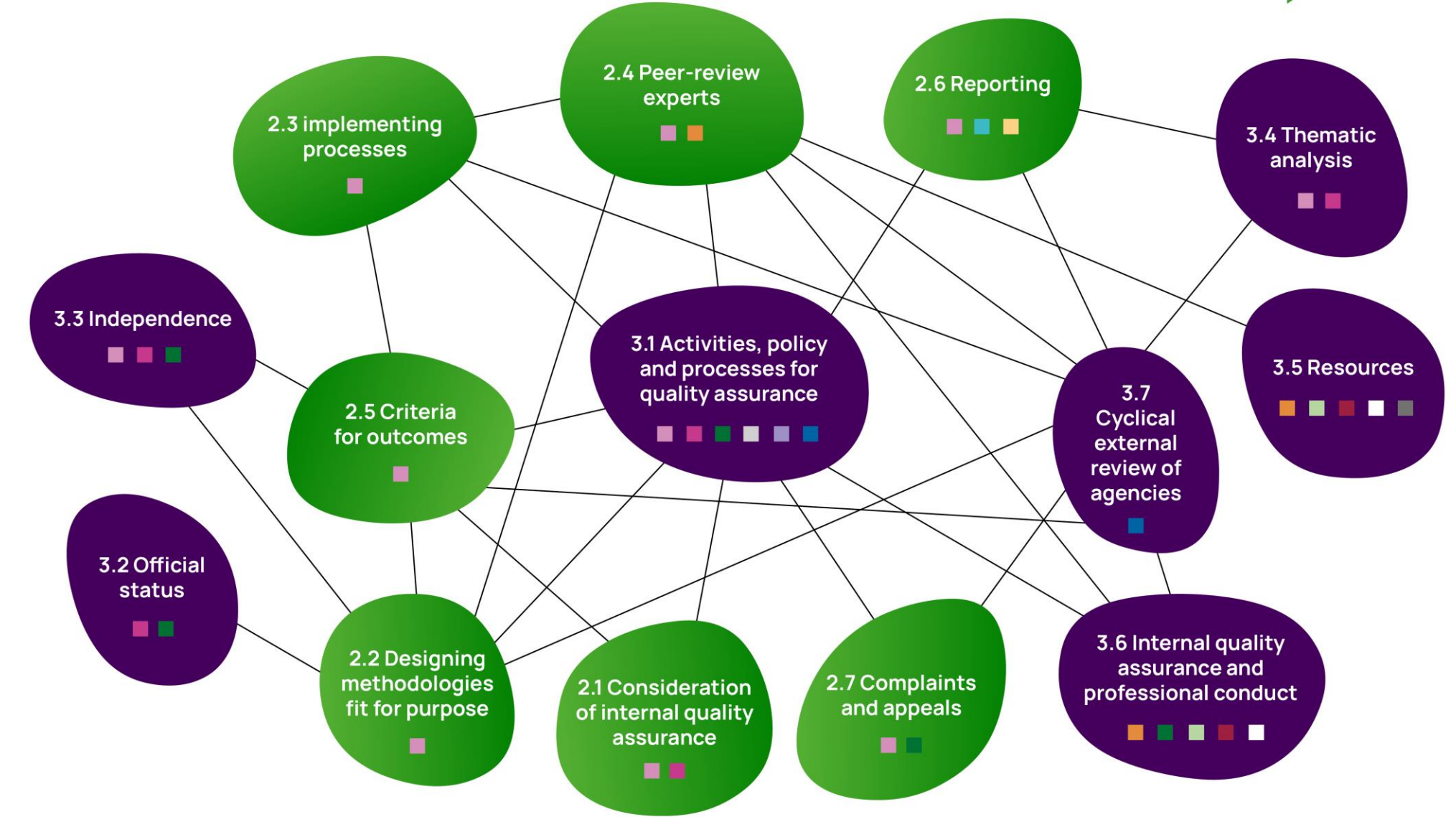




Embedding ESG



ESG Parts 2 and 3 in QAA Context





Reflective Questions

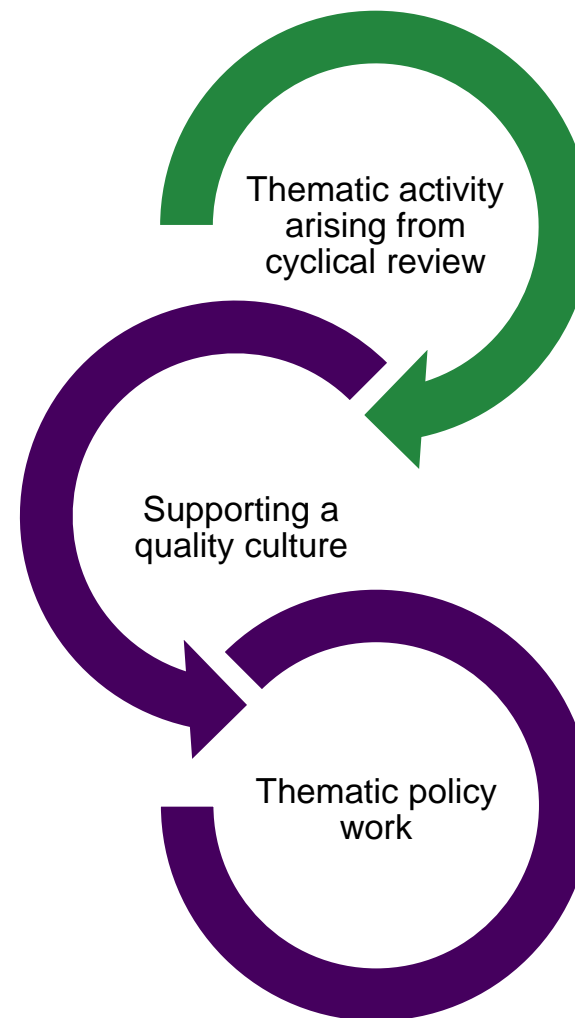
- These have been developed by team to enable all parts of the organisation to consider how they can embed the ESG within their activity.
- The reflective questions are intended to stimulate discussion and support potential areas for development.
- These questions are intended to provoke discussion among individual teams and do not act as a check list. They can be used to guide discussion among teams around how the ESG can be better integrated into business processes.





Case Study

ESG 3.4 - Thematic Analysis





Thematic Approach

IQA manual Policy expectations

QAA expects each of its cyclical external review methods to normally produce a reflective retrospective analysis of findings at the end of a cycle or at least every 6 years.

At the commissioning/design stage method leads should discuss thematic outputs with the commissioning body and agree the specific thematic outputs, costing and timing.

The annual method evaluation for each method will identify high-level findings enabling cross-method themes to be identified to feed into Membership services; the summary findings will cover areas of good practice and areas for development seen across reports and engagements.

Those involved with producing thematic analyses will engage with stakeholders to help design relevant, useful resources that have value to higher education.



ENQA review SAR

“QAA meets this Standard through regularly analysing the outcomes of its review work and drawing on the feedback of the sector through its broader sector engagement and the intelligence gained from sector and national priorities. The outcome from this activity is used to produce reports, guidance materials, research, case studies and webinars .”



Supporting evidence

- Sections 2.7 and 3.2 of IQA Manual: Policy statement and guidance - Thematic analysis
- Enhancement-led Institutional Review outcomes (knowledge database)
- Enhancement-led Institutional Review Thematic Reports
- Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) outcomes
- Degree Apprenticeships Review (Wales)
- Review of Digital Learning (Wales)
- Scotland - Focus On projects
- Scotland Enhancement Themes
- Academic integrity
- Collaborative Enhancement Projects
- QER case studies
- Membership themes 2022-23



ENQA and EQAR outcomes





ENQA outcome

Panel conclusion, partially compliant

The panel recommends QAA to develop a clearer plan for thematic analyses for all of its external QA activities in the spirit of ESG 3.4 and to regularly implement this plan, leading to a systematic and nations-wide production of such analyses in spirit of the standard.

The panel commends QAA for its exemplary exploratory and communicative work on “new frontiers” of quality assurance and higher education in general, which has led to QAA being internationally recognised as a well-established hub for information and guidance.



EQAR outcome

Compliant

The Committee finds that the current activity is sufficient in its understanding and interpretation of the standard and therefore could not follow the panel's judgement of partial compliance and concluded that QAA complies with ESG 3.4

The Register Committee nevertheless underlines the panel's recommendation that QAA should develop a clear plan for thematic analysis for all of its external QA activities in all nations of the UK and publish them on its website.



Thank you

qaa.ac.uk

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2023
Registered charity numbers: 1062746 and SC037786



Digitalisation of the QA Process

Hold Slide





Stakeholder Engagement

Kevin McStravock, Lead Policy
Officer (Nations and Europe)
Alastair Delaney, Deputy CEO





QAA

Approach to Stakeholder Engagement

- Our approach to Stakeholder Engagement is divided into four focus areas:
 - Operational Engagement
 - Strategic Engagement
 - Membership Activity (Membership)
 - QAA Board, its sub-committees and other sector committees
- Stakeholder Engagement is one of three focus areas of the Public Affairs Strategy

Operational
Engagement
(QAA officers)

Strategic
Engagement
(Public Affairs)

Membership
Activity
(Membership)

Board and
Committees
(Governance)

Stakeholder relationships: relationship building and engagement to support our work and goals

Outcome: We have strong, equal partnerships with key organisations and stakeholders built on trust for the benefit of our organisational purpose

- **Goal 1:** Re-calibrate existing relationships to reflect desired power balance, repair relationships that have lapsed, rectify gaps and horizon scan for new relationships
- **Goal 2:** Implement a strategic approach to key stakeholder meetings with clear roles and responsibilities, effective briefs, feedback and follow up, that opens doors for QAA
- **Goal 3:** Increase presence of 'QAA ambassadors' at sector events to improve QAA's visibility, including more strategic deployment of SLT and the Board in particular





Operational Engagement

- QAA officers meet annually with all institutions to receive important updates about their QA processes including any follow-up activity from previous reviews.
- QAA also meets on a regular basis with funder-regulators to update them on funded work and provide updates to relevant committees
- We also meet with all those involved in QAA funded enhancement activity to oversee its delivery





Strategic Engagement

- QAA's Public Affairs team oversees our strategic engagement and support SLT members to engage with strategic partners.
- This includes liaison with government ministers and civil servants, partner agencies and other interested parties e.g. opposition politicians
- Political monitoring helps us to identify opportunities to draw links between QAA's work and government/policy priorities.

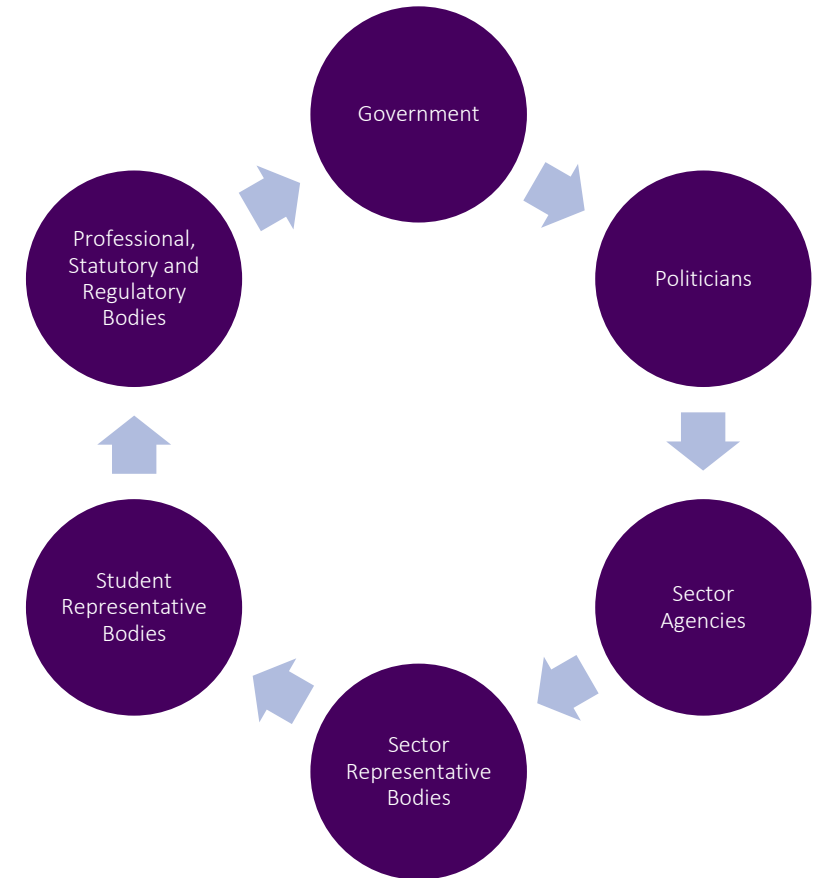




QAA

Who are our strategic partners?

- **Government:** Government Ministers, Ministerial Advisers and Civil Servants
- **Politicians:** Members of the Education Committee, those with an interest in issues relevant to QAA's remit e.g. Artificial Intelligence, Lifelong Learning.
- **Sector Agencies:** Other agencies operating in the sector e.g. Jisc, Advance HE, College Development Network, Education Scotland.
- **Sector Representative Bodies:** The voice of universities and colleges
- **Student Representative Bodies:** National Union of Students
- **Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies**





Board and Committees

- QAA Board has a number of committees that serve to support engagement with key stakeholders:
 - Consultative Board
 - Strategic Advisory Committees
- QAA provides secretariat support for key sector committees in Scotland and Wales.
- Review Method Development is informed by:
 - Stakeholder Workshops
 - Advisory Committees





Student Engagement

Student engagement is embedded throughout QAA's work including in:

- **Review:** Students participate as review team members, meet with reviewers and provide student submissions.
- **Governance:** 2 x Student Board members & Student Strategic Advisory Committee
- **Advisory Groups:** Students contribute to all QAA Advisory Groups
- **Enhancement Activity:** Students work in partnership with staff on enhancement projects





Membership Activity

- Our Membership offer is open to UK and international institutions and offers:
- **Webinars, Events and Workshops:** Attracting over 3,000 participants from over 300 organisations
- **Networks:** Bringing together senior leaders, quality leads and students, and offering a dedicated space for quality professionals in colleges, independent providers and other provider types.
- **Training:** Professional development opportunities including an annual International Quality Assurance Programme





ENQA Review 2023

ESG 3.1: "The panel commends QAA on the systematic and effective management of the wide array of stakeholders and their involvement in the agency's work in external quality assurance."

ESG 2.3: "The panel appreciates how systematically and effectively QAA involves students in basically every stage of the review process. "





Thank you

Any questions?

qaa.ac.uk

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2023
Registered charity numbers: 1062746 and SC037786



Overview of the Review Process

**Christine Jones, Quality
Manager**





Presentation Overview

- Distinctive features of QAA's approach to external quality activity
- Key characteristics
- The role of the QAA Officer
- The review visit
- Summary – primary purposes of QAA's external quality activity



Distinctive features of QAA's approach to external review

An enhancement-led approach

The development and maintenance of the standards and frameworks that underlie quality and standards for UK HE

The protection and championing of the student interest

Close collaborative working with the HE sector and its agencies to continuously develop quality

The production of practical resources

The organisation of events to promote shared learning and effective practice



Key characteristics of external review methods

Methods are:

- designed to test provision against agreed and specified external reference points
- designed in consultation with the sector and method handbooks are published
- based on self-evaluation by the provider
- based on a clear evidence and information base



Reviews are:

- conducted and assessments made by peer reviewers (including student reviewers)
- managed by a QAA Officer



Further key characteristics

Meetings with staff and with students separately

Student academic experience is a key focus

Reviews are evidence based assessments

Outcomes, judgements and findings are set out within each method

Quality and consistency of reports is assured through moderation

Review reports are published and reviews followed up

Appeals and complaints processes in all handbooks

It is designed to drive enhancement and continuing development





Role of the QAA officer

This includes:

- being the 'guardian' of the review method
- managing the work of the team, ensuring compliance with the review method
- facilitating constructive dialogue with the provider
- chairing the Judgement meeting
- ensuring commendations, affirmations and recommendations made are specific and precise
- editing and finalising the review report





QAA

The review visit

Meetings with all relevant stakeholders

All team members take the role of chair

Sometimes a hybrid approach to aid inclusivity

Some reviews totally online

Chat function only used for meeting practicalities

Meetings are not recorded

A meeting summary is produced by the QAAO



Purpose of external review

- To assess the effectiveness of an institution's internal QA
- To encourage continuous development and enhancement
- To support the development of providers' embedded internal quality cultures
- To promote the role of students and the student voice in designing and delivering quality learning experiences
- To provide reliable information for funders, regulators and the public





Thank you

Any questions?

qaa.ac.uk

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2023
Registered charity numbers: 1062746 and SC037786