

"APPROVED"
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REPORT
ON THEMATIC ANALYSIS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF
QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS
in 2023

In line with the suggestions for further improvement set out in the report on the compliance of the Independent Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (hereinafter referred to as the Agency or ARQA) with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), based on an external review conducted between February 2022 and February 2023, section ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS states that the Agency may develop a clear process for identifying topics for thematic analysis within its system of quality assurance.

In order to address this recommendation, the Agency has developed a Regulation on Organisation of Thematic Analysis within the Quality Management System ¹ (hereinafter the Regulation) and a plan for future regular publications

The Regulation is developed to describe the procedure for organising thematic analysis using materials of institutional and programme accreditation conducted by the Agency. The procedure consists of 5 stages. Let us describe the fulfilment of 2 stages.

The first stage of thematic analysis is to examine the data for broad themes. At this stage it was decided what to code, what to use, and which codes best represented the content. A reflexivity diary was started to explain how the data was coded, why and what the results were. As for the purposes of our thematic analysis we are limited to the quality assurance framework, the names of HEIs, names of educational programmes, comments from the external visit according to ARQA standards, etc. were used as coding data.

Once the coding process was complete, initial themes were identified. This involved analysing the coded segments and grouping them into broader themes or categories. For example, sorting the data by code identified the frequency of themes present in the data, patterns, similarities and relationships between coded segments to identify common themes that captured the essence of the data. The sorting process determined the relevance of a theme, the sample size to be analysed, the need to expand the themes or divide some of them into sub-themes.

This approach differed from the methods used by the Agency in developing thematic analyses for previous years. In particular, thematic analyses included only a statement of the number of observations by HEIs (Table 1).

¹ Regulations on the organisation of thematic analysis within the quality management system. - Astana, 2023

Table 1 - Information on the number of comments on educational programmes (EP) of educational organisations accredited by ARQA

Year	Organisation of education	Number of OPs	Number of observations
2019	Kokshetau State University named after Sh. Ualikhanov	5	9
	Karaganda State Industrial University	8	32
	Atyrau Institute of Engineering and Humanities	10	29
	East Kazakhstan State University	15	20
	Atyrau State University named after Kh.	26	56
	Pavlodar State Pedagogical University	24	74
	Kazakh Humanitarian-Legal Innovation University	19	41
	Shakarim State University of Semey city	27	101
2020	Aktobe Regional State University named after K.	21	47
	Shakarim State University of Semey city	25	102
	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University	12	30
	Shakarim State University of Semey city	13	68
2021	North Kazakhstan University named after M.	7	46
		212	625

Selection of topics for 2023.

Taking into account the shortcomings of the thematic analyses for 2019-2021, based on the data of the reflexivity diary, information on expert recommendations is collected, distributed by HEIs, fields of study according to the Classifier of fields of study with higher and postgraduate education, criteria and sub-criteria of ARQA standards for programme accreditation of higher and postgraduate education organisations², areas for improvement and examples of "best practice".

From the extensive information, let us select the data on recommendations to address the remarks identified by experts during the external visit, without taking into account specific HEIs and fields of study (Table 2).

² Standards of programme accreditation of educational programmes of higher and postgraduate education organisations. - Nur-Sultan, 2022

Table 2 - Selection of recommendations from external visit reports as a result of accreditations of educational programmes in 2023.

Name of the standard	Number of recommendations
Standard 1. Implementing the quality assurance policy	9
Standard 2. Educational programmes: development and approval	34
Standard 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and learning assessment	22
Standard 4. Students: admission, academic achievement support, certification	22
Standard 5. Faculty	35
Standard 6: Creative and personal development of students	3
Standard 7. Continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation of educational programmes	11
Standard 8-1. Specifics of the educational programme for the Bachelor's degree level	22
Standard 8-2. Specifics of the educational programme for the Master's level	2
Standard 8-3. Specifics of the educational programme for the doctoral level	1
Standard 9. Periodic external quality assurance procedures	0
	161

From the data obtained, a minimum of 5 standards were identified for which a thematic analysis should be conducted: these are standards for which the number of recommendations is 22 or more.

For Standard 2, the distribution of recommendations depending on the criteria is as follows (Figure 1):

Distribution by criteria

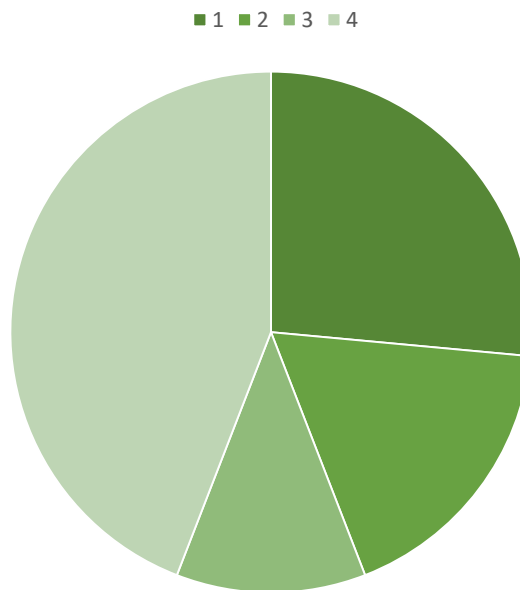


Figure 1 - Distribution of recommendations for standard 2.

Note: 1,2,3,4 - numbers of criteria

As can be seen from the figure, there are more recommendations on criterion 1 (more than 25%). They relate to whether the profile of the EP, representing its specific features, denoting its belonging to the relevant field of education, as well as taking into account the characteristics of the field of study, level of training, main types of professional activities, are observed. The next criterion by the number of recommendations is criterion 4 (about 50%), according to which the management of the OP should show the provision of the OP with the necessary educational, material, technical and social infrastructure that meets the needs of students and the quality requirements of the OP.

For Standard 5, the distribution of recommendations depending on the criteria is as follows (Figure 2):

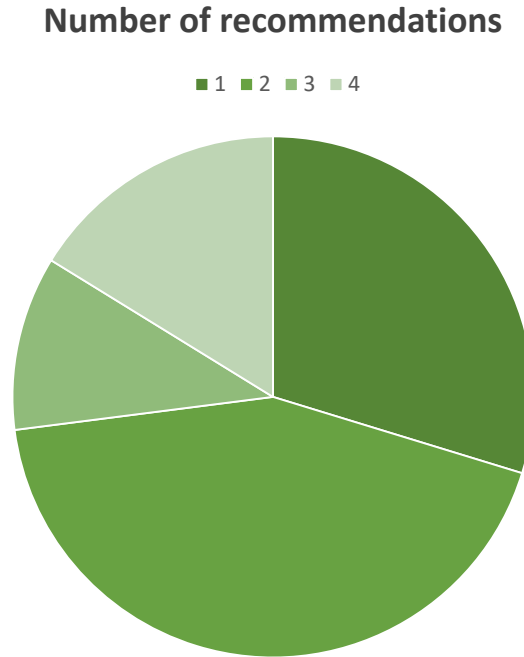


Figure 2 - Distribution of recommendations for standard 5.
Note: 1,2,3,4 - numbers of criteria

As it can be seen from the figure, the greatest number of recommendations for criterion 1 (more than 25%), according to which the management of the OP should show that the teaching staff teaching the classes of the OP meets the qualification requirements in terms of the proportion of teachers with a degree/academic degree/degree and/or academic title, and/or teachers who have been awarded titles. The next criterion by the number of recommendations is criterion 2 (about 50%), according to which the management of the OP should prove the effectiveness of the system of training and retraining, professional development, professional growth of the teaching staff.

The distribution of recommendations according to criteria for the other 3 standards is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 - Distribution of recommendations by standards for which the number of recommendations is 22 or more

Name of the standard	Criterion number				
	1	2	2	4	5
Standard 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and learning assessment	6	3	10	3	
Standard 4. Students: admission, achievement certification; academic support,	3	3	15	2	
Standard 8-1. Specifics of the educational programme for the Bachelor's degree level	2	19			1

Recommendations on these standards are given mainly on the involvement of student representatives in the collegial bodies of the faculty / institute; student participation in the development of educational programmes; student involvement in the assessment of the quality of EP, comprehensive work to accompany, support and ensure the progress of students' academic performance, the effectiveness of comprehensive career guidance work.

Conclusions

1. This report analyses the recommendations of ARQA experts according to the Agency's standards, so the relevance of this thematic analysis is to study the current experience of Kazakhstani HEIs from the perspective of the expert community and to identify problems in the activities of HEIs taking into account the foreign and national context.

2. The Agency considers that the active participation of experts in making observations, comments and recommendations indicates their willingness to contribute to the quality assurance process.

3. The Agency hopes that the activity of HEIs in the course of follow-up will be an indicator of the effectiveness of accreditation in general and its efficiency for HEIs in particular.

4. This report will be useful to the academic community, educational governing bodies, experts, employers.