



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between

the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, United Kingdom

and

the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education, Montenegro

This Memorandum of Understanding is made between the **Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**, Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 1UB, United Kingdom (UK), hereafter referred to as **QAA**, and

The **Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education**, Mihaila Lalića 1, 81000 Podgorica, Montenegro, hereafter referred to as **ACQAHE**

QAA and **ACQAHE** are referred to collectively as 'both Parties'.

Whereas

Established in 1997, QAA is a world-leading quality agency with unmatched experience of providing impartial regulatory and collaborative quality assurance and enhancement. QAA's main purpose is to ensure that students and learners experience the highest possible quality of education.

QAA does this by supporting universities and colleges in working with students, learners, governments, funders, and regulatory bodies to evidence and enhance the excellent quality and high standards of education they provide. QAA works to secure academic standards in UK higher education wherever it is delivered across the globe and takes a leading role in international developments in standards and quality, maintaining close relationships with many international quality assurance agencies, governments and higher education institutions.

Established in 2017 by the Government of Montenegro, ACQAHE is the leading state body for quality assurance in higher education. ACQAHE is in charge of managing the process of evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes in line with the European Standards and Guidelines. ACQAHE's vision is: credibility, international recognition and competitiveness of the Montenegrin higher education system achieved through its full integration into the European Higher Education Area, which will contribute to progress of

Montenegrin economy and society and to the improvement of the quality of life of Montenegrin citizens.

Besides evaluation procedures, ACQAHE's main activities include international relations, participation in EU-funded projects, as well as conducting research oriented to the improvement of the higher education system in Montenegro.

QAA and ACQAHE

Having comparable missions and institutional objectives in the assurance of quality in higher education, both parties wish to continue and deepen further their cooperation upon the terms contained herein.

Key principles: QAA and ACQAHE

Both Parties understand and mutually acknowledge their respective independent regulatory responsibilities as authorised by the separate national governments and/or as membership organisations recognised by national governments.

Both Parties envision benefits to be achieved through dialogue and cooperation, with benefits accruing to both agencies and to the institutions under their purview.

Both Parties understand the critical necessity of maintaining the confidentiality of information related to institutions, as well as to the agencies themselves as developed through accreditation activities.

Therefore, both Parties agree to the following framework for mutually supportive and collaborative engagement.

This Memorandum of Understanding is not exhaustive and is not intended to be legally binding between QAA and the ACQAHE, except where specifically stated.

Areas of cooperation and collaboration

To these ends, QAA and ACQAHE, in accordance with the framework of UK and Montenegrin laws and regulations, will pursue the following objectives for their mutual benefit:

(a) Mutual understanding

Work to enhance their understanding of each other's approach to assuring quality in higher education, the respective systems in place for quality assurance and enhancement in higher education, and the critical matters relating to quality and standards in higher education in both countries.

(b) Information exchange

Exchange information, news, updates and offer professional advice about each other's activities and processes, about developments in their respective country's higher education systems, and about cross-border providers operating in both jurisdictions with named contacts at each organisation, having regard for the confidentiality of the information and relevant Data Protection legislation.

(c) Staff development

Where appropriate and possible, support the development of staff from the two agencies through activities such as staff exchange, observing each other's review processes, and provision of training.

(d) Use of each other's reviewers

Where appropriate and possible, draw on reviewers or other specialists from each other's system to strengthen the international dimension of each other's review processes.

(e) Recognition

Where appropriate and possible, in operations relating to quality assurance of higher education within one party's jurisdiction but originating from the other party's jurisdiction, have due regard to the relevant decisions and judgements of the other party.

(f) Collaboration

Where appropriate and possible, collaborate in relation to mutually-agreed projects and activities for the benefit of both parties, including the quality enhancement of transnational education, the identification of fraudulent institutions, awarding bodies or accrediting agencies in the UK and in Montenegro, supporting student mobility and undertaking research on quality assurance related issues.

More specifically, at the end of this agreement, QAA and ACQAHE aim to have achieved concrete collaboration in the following activities:

- Sharing experiences regarding the quality assurance and evaluation of higher education institutions, including observing each other's quality assurance processes and undertaking quality enhancement activities
- Exploring opportunities for reciprocal support with developing contextually appropriate approaches to quality and standards in higher education, including compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)
- Exploring opportunities for mutual support with training of quality experts
- Providing mutual shadowing opportunities when each agency undertakes accreditation review visits in the other agency's territory
- ACQAHE encouraging stakeholders from universities in Montenegro to engage with QAA's accreditation services
- Providing opportunities for each agency to join the other's webinars and events, such as conferences, forums, workshops, debates, the QAA International Partner Forum and QAA Annual Conference
- Providing opportunities for staff training and thus participation in training programs for ACQAHE's employees, such as the International Quality Assurance Programme organised by QAA.
- Hold bilateral meetings as appropriate to monitor progress and discuss key issues in relation to joint efforts to develop quality assurance and accreditation activity further
- To participate in other agreed activities, if it is in the interest of the signatories to the Agreement.

If any additional costs will be incurred as a result of the collaboration, agreement to progress any allocation/reimbursement of costs should be agreed between QAA and ACQAHE before any work is undertaken.

Confidentiality

Both Parties agree to ensure that any information of a confidential nature ('confidential information') that is shared between Parties is safeguarded and remains confidential.

Both Parties agree not to disclose confidential information received from the other without the written consent of the disclosing Party. Both Parties acknowledge that, in appropriate cases, they may reach a separate written agreement about the handling of particular confidential information or classes of confidential information. Both Parties agree that this paragraph is legally binding.

Retention of information

Information exchanged under this Memorandum of Understanding will be held and disposed of in accordance with QAA's and ACQAHE's retention schedules. For both QAA and ACQAHE, this will be up to five years.

Intellectual property rights

Any reports, notes, records, correspondence, documents, computer and other storage, such as disks or other documents and materials used in this Memorandum of Understanding, which has been generated or is already owned by either organisation, shall be, and shall remain, the property of that organisation.

The settlement

In the event of a dispute between both Parties, it shall be resolved by friendly consultations.

Duration of Memorandum

The Memorandum of Understanding will take effect from the date of its signature and shall continue for **five years** unless it is terminated by the giving of three months' notice by either Party. It may be extended on mutual agreement of both parties.

Alteration of Memorandum

This Memorandum is signed by the parties in a spirit of amicable cooperation. The terms of the Memorandum may be altered with the written approval of both parties.

Management and liaison arrangements for the Memorandum


The Chief Executive of QAA (at the time of signing, Vicki Stott) and the Director of ACQAHE (at the time of signing, Goran Danilović) will have responsibility for managing the implementation of the terms of the Memorandum and taking stock of the terms of the Memorandum on an annual basis. This responsibility may be delegated to relevant members of the agencies' staff in relation to particular areas of cooperation.

Resources

Unless alternative arrangements are specifically agreed to meet particular project requirements, each Party will normally cover their own costs of implementing the terms of the Memorandum. For particular areas of cooperation, donor funding may be sought from other sources.

The text of the Memorandum is prepared in two original copies in English, with one copy for each Party.

Signatures of the Parties:

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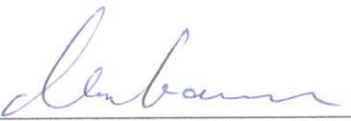
Location: London, UK

Date: 27 June 2024

Vicki Stott
Chief Executive

**The Quality Assurance Agency for
Higher Education (QAA)**

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Location: London, UK

Date: 27th June 2024

Goran Danilović
Director

**Agency for Control and Quality
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