



## **EXTERNAL EXPERT QUALITY REPORT FOR THE ERASMUS+ C3QA PROJECT, Final Version**

**"PROMOTING INTERNATIONALIZATION OF RESEARCH THROUGH ESTABLISHMENT AND  
OPERATIONALIZATION OF CYCLE 3 QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN LINE WITH THE EUROPEAN  
INTEGRATION" -C3QA**

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### **Revision/version history:**

**Version 1.0:** Concept notes about structure of the Report sent to Project Coordinator.

**Version 1.1:** The draft version with preliminary findings, opinions, comments etc. sent to Project Coordinator together with list of the questions.

**Version/Revision 1.2:** The semi-final version with list of additional questions sent to Project Coordinator.

**Version/Revision 1.3 (Final Version):** After receiving the additional inputs from Project Coordinator and from Project partners responsible for different work packages, the Final expert QA Report is sent to Consortium.

## 1. Introduction

Higher education and research are the backbone of the European response to the challenges and rapid changes. Therefore, university should be able to respond to a great variety of requests and innovation processes which involve the new knowledge and highly trained staff. Quality Assurance System (QAS), among other prerequisites, is of a vital importance for European and national policies in the area of Higher Education Reforms. It is a systematic process of determining whether a product (in this case PhD holder) or service (Doctoral Education) meet specified requirements. This will ensure public confidence in the quality of doctoral education, as well as in the reliability of the third cycle in one country.- In 2005, the Salzburg Principles were adopted, that have become the pivot for initiating wide-ranging reforms in the area of the third cycle education. Briefly, these principles can be summarized in:

1. Achieving advancement of knowledge through the original research as a primary objective of a doctoral programme;
2. Embedding in institutional strategies and policies;
3. Increasing diversity of doctoral schools;
4. Considering early stage researchers as professionals with commensurate rights

Considering the crucial role of supervision and assessment in doctoral education based on a transparent contractual framework of shared responsibilities between different partners (doctoral candidates, supervisors, institutions and, if necessary, other partners; Achieving critical mass in doctoral education;

5. Defining the duration of study period within a doctoral programme;
6. Promoting innovative structures in third cycle education
7. Increasing mobility of doctoral students
8. Ensuring adequate funding of doctoral programmes

Realizing the relevance of reforming the doctoral education in 4 countries - Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Ukraine, the Consortium led by the French University in Armenia Foundation, with the help of the EU partners from France, Spain and Poland, submitted and later launched the project entitled "C3QA - Promoting internationalization of research through establishment and operationalization of cycle 3 quality assurance system in line with the European integration".



## 2. Project aims

The main objective of the C3QA project is to launch and operationalize a robust quality assurance system for internationalization of Cycle 3 programs in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Ukraine. The specific objectives are:

- To develop/update national policy frameworks for cycle 3 programs in line with the Salzburg principles;
- To build on the capacity of the systems to efficiently operationalize the internal and external quality assurance systems for Cycle 3 programs;
- To establish an external and internal quality assurance systems to promote quality of Cycle 3 programs (leading to PhD degree);
- To promote internationalization of Cycle 3 programs with joint efforts of the key stakeholders and cross-regional cooperation.

The main outcomes of the project are synthesized in:

1. Improving regulatory frameworks for Quality Assurance (QA) of cycle 3 programs in 4 countries;
2. Proposing national level guidelines, standards and procedures of QA for cycle 3 programs to be approved by the national authorities;
3. Implementing a pilot accreditation of one cycle 3 program per each partner country by implementing proposed QAS methodology.
4. Equipping the participating HEIs with necessary Quality Assurance infrastructure.

### **3. Project structure**

From the main outcomes the following operational work packages (WPs) and activities (Ai) are derived:

#### **WP 1: Capacity building**

- A1.1 Fact-finding;
- A1.2 Inter-project coaching with Tempus VERITAS project;
- A1.3 Training kit
- A1.4 Trained staff

#### **WP 2: Development/revision of national policy framework of QA of Cycle 3 programs in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Ukraine**

A2.1 Synopsis of partner countries national policies, procedures and structures for Cycle 3 program QA in line with the Salzburg principles

A2.2 Regulatory frameworks (including standards and procedures) for QA of cycle 3 programs;

A2.3 Workshop on EQA of cycle 3

A2.4 National level guidelines on establishment of QA systems for cycle 3 programs for Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Ukraine

#### **WP 3: Development of internal and external QA systems for Cycle 3 programs**

A3.1 Synopsis of HEI approaches to IQA of Cycle 3 programs in line with the Salzburg principles

A3.2 Workshop on operationalization of EQA and IQA

A3.3 External QA bodies are established

A3.4 EQA body operationalization systems

A3.5 Internal QA systems are operational

A3.6 Internal quality assurance policy manuals for the PCIs are operational.

A3.7 Equipment purchase for EQA and IQA bodies

#### **WP 4: Pilot accreditation of Cycle 3 program providers**

4.1 Self-assessment reports by HEIs



4.2 External evaluation of Cycle 3 programs providers by peers through site-visits

4.3 Accreditation of cycle 3 programs

4.4 Workshop on the lessons learnt

4.5 Refinement of the developed tools

The additional are standard work packages in order to ensure project flow and control

**WP 5: Quality Control and Monitoring**

**WP 6: Dissemination**

**WP 7: Sustainability**

**WP 8: Management of the project**

## 4. Analyse of the results

The operational and standard activities are analysed emphasizing the strong (marked as green) and weak points (marked as red) of achieved results/deliverables. The analysis is based on inputs which were accessible for the analysis and audit (internet, documents, skype meetings, interviews with participants, etc.). It is done by each Activity or by group of them.

### WP 1: Capacity building

#### A1.1 Fact-findings

##### Fact-finding Concept Note.

This deliverable –refers to the methodology how to implement “fact findings” research. It is a well done document introducing the authors in the structure of the reports they should produce. This is a thoughtfully crafted well-done document representing the authors the structure of the reports that they needed to prepare for the project.

##### Fact-finding reports for Armenia, Ukraine, Mongolia and Kazakhstan.

A relatively well done report with lots of general and particular information, which covers all aspects and challenges of doctoral education in partner countries (Armenia, Ukraine, Mongolia and Kazakhstan) with a good “state of the art” overview. The synthesis of fact-finding reports per country is done through elaboration of a document called “Synthesis of Issues and Propositions on Improvement of Legal Framework of the Cycle 3 Programme” : <https://c3-qa.com/project-documents/>

In these documents, the main weaknesses are presented and issues and appropriate propositions for improvement are suggested. It presents a good example how to write some kind of narrative SWOT analyses.

#### A1.2 Inter-project coaching with Tempus VERITAS project

This activity is realised within thematic presentations within following workshops: - Lyon Workshop on Operationalization Techniques of IQA and EQA for Cycle 3 Programs, Alcalá Workshop to Develop the Regulatory Frameworks for EQA within the Erasmus + C3QA Project in Alcalá De Henares, Spain.

#### A1.3 Training kit

#### A1.4 Trained staff

The activities A1.3 and A1.4 have been realised through the following Contributions:

- Documents on Organization of Quality Assurance and Doctoral Studies in Spain, France, and Poland. These are high quality documents that can be used not only for involved countries but elsewhere where the quality assurance on doctoral education are touched upon. They are - introduced as “good practices”.
- – Training Kit– for supporting the continuous professional development of staff involved in Quality Assurance of Cycle 3 (doctoral) programmes in Higher Education. The document is a compilation of the above mentioned documents on Organization of Quality Assurance and Doctoral Studies in Spain, France, and Poland with additional explanations. This is a very useful document for training, even for research on quality issues relevant to the doctoral education.
- Resources on Doctoral Education are accessible on the website. A good collection of the documents that covers different aspects of doctoral education (Doctoral Education for Europe, Doctoral Education through the Lenses of the Bologna Process, From Product to Process, The Reform of Doctoral Education in Europe and China, The Formation of Doctoral Education, Survey Doctoral Education in Europe Today, Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training, 2013 Byrne Quality Assurance ARDE project results, 2010 EUACDE Universities Achievements Salzburg Principles 1, Creative Inquiry and Scholarship: Applications and Implications in a Doctoral Degree, Doctoral Studies and Qualifications in Europe and the United States: Status and Prospects, Doctoral Education-Taking Salzburg Forward Implementation and New Challenges, Maintaining a Quality Culture in Doctoral Education at Research-Intensive Universities, Bologna Seminar Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society).
- Throughout the entire timeframe of the project the training activities of the staff are performed in the forms of thematic seminars, presentations, brainstorming, team work etc. It was a great opportunity for participants to become trained in this important field.
- As very useful I estimate specific documents sent by several involved Universities on quantitative indicators on training (how many persons are trained from different target groups, staff, professionals in doctoral education, administrative in doctoral education) and which competences they learned? How many certificates were issued etc. Good example of such documents presents KAZGUU which had at all 26 people trained from different target groups. Also, KNUTE had very intensive training activities.

## **WP 2: Development/revision of national policy framework of QA of Cycle 3 programs in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Ukraine**

A2.1 Synopsis of partner countries national policies, procedures and structures for Cycle 3 program QA in line with Salzburg principles



A2.2 Regulatory frameworks (including standards and procedures) for QA of cycle 3 programs;

A2.3 Workshop on EQA of cycle 3

A2.4 National level guidelines on establishment of QA systems for cycle 3 programs for Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Ukraine

- The above WP2 is summarised in Synthesis of Issues and Propositions on Improvement of Legal Framework of the Cycle 3 Programme. This set consists of “Armenia Cycle 3 Issues and Propositions”, “Kazakhstan Cycle 3 Issues and Propositions”, “Mongolia Cycle 3 Issues and Propositions”, as well as “Ukraine Cycle 3 Issues and Propositions”. All analyses are done having in mind the following criteria/aspects: Salzburg principle, Regulatory field, Issue Proposition for improvement. The state on the terrain is compared with the criteria.
- Several Thematic Workshops or Seminars in Partner or EU countries have been organised for the purposes of the project focused on the analysis of the QA, EQA, IQA and their interaction.
- National level guidelines on establishment of QA systems for cycle 3 programs for Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Ukraine are proposed by the project. Some of them are embedded in the legal documents of partner countries, as it is in case of Mongolia.
- Although all deliverables scheduled by –A2.1.4 are realised, one - synthesized document (in short notes) should be prepared, for example, who accepted recommendations and in which form? What are the common and what are -specific recommendations? After revisions the C3QA project sent a Table with summarised Indicators of progress within Regulatory framework, National level guidelines on establishment of QA system for Cycle 3 Program, EQA body established and operational, IQA policy manuals, 1 Cycle 3 Program evaluated and accredited, 1 equipped QA unit, Fact-finding reveals the actual capacity building needs peculiar to each context, Training kit for HEIs ensuring capacity to develop and apply QA mechanisms applicable for Cycle 3 program providers, IQA standards, indicators, mechanisms and procedures for Cycle 3 programs research program levels are in line with the European guidelines. The links about documents which show “Nota bene” are provided.

### **WP 3: Development of internal and external QA systems for Cycle 3 programs**

A3.1 Synopsis of HEI approaches to IQA of Cycle 3 programs in line with the Salzburg Principles

A3.2 Workshop on operationalization of EQA and IQA

A3.3 External QA bodies are established

A3.4 EQA body operationalization systems

A3.5 Internal QA systems are operational

A3.6 Internal quality assurance policy manuals for the PCIs are operational.

A3.7 Equipment purchase for EQA and IQA bodies

- The main deliverables from the above WPs and Activities can be summarised in
  - IQA Policy Manuals are delivered for 3 Armenian Universities - French University in Armenia, State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia, and Yerevan State University.
  - State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia (SAFA) IQA manual should be better structured and introduced (template, methodology etc). In revision process I am informed that request has been sent to SAFA to prepare Table with indicators.
  - IQA Policy Manuals are delivered for 2 Kazakh universities, South-Kazakhstan State University and KAZGUU Law School
  - IQA Policy Manuals are delivered for 2 Ukrainian universities, Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics and Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics
  - IQA Policy Manuals are delivered for 2 Mongolian universities, - National University of Mongolia and - Otgontenger University.
  - IQA rules are similar for all 4 countries. - Otgontenger University IQA is a good example of methodologically done IQA document.
  - Good point is a very intensive campaign of Workshops on operationalization of EQA and IQA during the project life cycle. The workshops and seminars were very diverse in terms of target groups and very focused in terms of topics.
  - QA, EQA and IQA bodies are established and they become operational. Good and innovative examples are the experts panels established for pilot accreditation purposes. Many other instructional and national bodies are established.

#### **WP 4: Pilot accreditation of Cycle 3 program providers**

4.1 Self-assessment reports by HEIs

4.2 External evaluation of Cycle 3 programs providers by peers through site-visits

4.3 Accreditation of cycle 3 programs

4.4 Workshop on the lessons learnt

4.5 Refinement of the developed tools

- The above WP 4 delivered 2 main groups of deliverables:
  - EQA standards/guidelines for Pilot Accreditation

- Standards and Guidelines for the QA of C3 programmes for Armenia. This is a good document based on the requested criteria. The detailed SWOT analysis is the most valuable part of this document. -
  - Standards and Guidelines for the QA of C3 programmes for Kazakhstan. In this good document clear rules are set up for QA of C3 programmes in this country.
  - Standards and Guidelines for the QA of C3 programmes for Ukraine. The French document on accreditation is introduced, because the project was obliged to use the standards and guidelines from one of the participating QA agencies in the project. In fact, the Ukrainian QA agency being non-functional during the project lifetime, Ukrainian partners from universities were not able to create standards and guidelines for the external QA. And the Ministry was against the introduction of new system of external QA. The Consortium found appropriate solution for this problem introducing the practice of good example from EU partner country.
  - The use of French QA standards and guidelines was also conditioned by the willingness of the Ukrainians universities passing official international accreditation for PhD programmes in Economics. Here we have a good example of overcoming national barriers with offering one international document.
  - Standards and Guidelines for the QA of C3 programmes for Mongolia. – This is a good document with clear rules and based on the requested criteria.
  - In Standards and Guidelines for the QA the criteria related to the industry and labour market should also be included. The Consortium agreed to take in account this remark during project implementation – sustainability of the project.
  - The students’ opinions and pools should also be considered. Here we agreed with Consortium that it is matter of time. Namely, during project implementation all Institutions will take in account to sense students’ opinion about a new system.
- Self-Assessment Reports for Pilot Accreditations of Cycle 3 (Doctoral) Programmes. The self-assessment reports for the following universities are provided:
- Armenia
    - French University in Armenia Foundation (UFAR)
    - State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia (SAFAA)
    - Yerevan State University (YSU)

- Ukraine
  - Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics (KNUTE)
  - Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics (KhNUE)
- Kazakhstan
  - Kazakh Humanities and Law University (KAZGUU)
  - M.Auezov South Kazakhstan State University (SKSU)
- Mongolia
  - Otgontenger University (OU)
  - National University of Mongolia (NUM)
- The main comment on deliverables from WP4 was that no enough proofs about pilot accreditation (any document from responsible bodies that PhD program is accredited following the preparation of C3QA guidelines and standards, usually it is a letter from responsible ministries) is presented. Also, some letters with conclusions and acts from the University Councils should be welcome, even at the faculty level). It is useful to put on the project website a copy of the accreditation documents. After considering this comment the Consortium collected evidences and made them accessible in the project web site and promise will mention them in the final Report.
- For each site visit at least three peers from project partner institutions participated. The list of the site-visit participants was evidenced. Besides, national experts together with peers were also involved in the site-visit panels.
- The criteria related to the industry and labour market should also be included in the self-assessment. Even, those documents from industry and services can be from workshops, study visits etc.
- It will be very remarkable and useful to have conclusions from the Workshops on the lessons learnt, because it is a kind of project conclusion.

#### **WP 5: Quality Control and Monitoring**

- It seems that QC has been done within project management that is good approach. Quality Assurance Plan of C3QA Project provided is a very concise document and involves all important elements.
- After each workshop an online evaluation was organized. Consortium should make efforts to do them more visible through the project web site.

- Students' opinions and questionnaires - should also be very useful for building a real QA system.
- The recommendations from NEOs after each monitoring visit were shared with the partners in order to address timely. They were very useful for on-line correction.

#### **WP 6: Dissemination**

- Dissemination is one of the best achievements of the project. We have internal, external, regional dissemination.
- Dissemination Strategy for Erasmus+ C3QA project is a high-quality and concise document.
- Different dissemination activities are implemented in all the countries. They are presented in conference website via news releases as well as various other media channels.
- During the preparation of project final report partners provided information on dissemination activities, which are shared through project web site. Also, some statistics of accessing the dissemination channels are provided. It is impressive that C3QA project was very visited by auditory, coming from different target groups.
- Dissemination activities in EU countries should be better. EU countries are also obligated to perform dissemination activities? Their role is also to do their job visible for others. During the preparation of project final report the Coordinator needs to re-ask EU partners to provide the detailed information on dissemination activities, which should be shared through project web site.

#### **WP 7: Sustainability**

- In some respect sustainability of the project is achieved in some countries as in Mongolia, where the QA from C3QA is embedded in national legislation.
- In the other countries it is partially achieved through the Standards and Guidelines for the QA of C3 programmes, even though not formalized in the legislation yet.
- The sustainability on the local (university level) is well achieved by IQA.
- It is obviously that C3QA project delivered important documents (like strategies, recommendations...), which promise good project sustainability. Those are very important documents, which define the program of short and long term sustainability. Good example is the main strategy for project sustainability related to the adoption of the policy and tools for internal and external QA of doctoral programmes. At the university level, all participating universities adopted the internal quality assurance policy for QA of doctoral programmes. As to the external QA tools: in Mongolia and Kazakhstan the standards and guidelines for QA of doctoral programmes are officially adopted. 3 official accreditations were done in



the project lifetime for doctoral programmes in Educational Studies and Biology in Mongolia, and Chemistry in Kazakhstan. In Ukraine the piloted French standards and guidelines were presented to the newly functioning QA agency for consideration. In Armenia, the Standards and guidelines for QA of doctoral programmes can be officially adopted only after adoption of the draft law on higher education which is currently under public discussion.

#### **WP 8: Management of the project**

- It is obvious- that project had very good management led with the coordinating university.
- The daily management is visible via minutes, nominations, Committees, preparation and realisation of all activities.
- The project management is very well documented.
- I am not competent for financial management and I did not have any reach to any financial document on the website. Thus, I am not able to comment on this aspect of the management.

## 5. Final Opinion and Recommendations

- Through close examination of the work packages, deliverables and the entire project, I am very well satisfied that an excellent job is done in the realization of the core objectives of the project. Particularly,
- Most of the planned outcomes of C3QA project have been achieved.-
  - The regulatory frameworks for Quality Assurance (QA) of cycle 3 programs in 4 countries are improved with several embedded solutions in corresponding legal acts that guarantee better quality of C3 QA process. Those solutions are the result of Consortium work and it consists of many elements of good EU practices transferred from the EU partners during the period of the project implementation.
  - The C3QA Consortium proposed a set of national level guidelines, standards and procedures of QA for cycle 3 programs to be approved by the national authorities. It is expected that the national bodies will accept them and embed the proposed documents and standards in the mandatory documents in the near future. Also, such guidelines and standards can be used as examples of “a good practice” for QA of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle as well as for the QA in general education and research.
  - The Consortium did its best for implementing a pilot accreditation of cycle 3 programs in each partner country using very well-developed QAS methodology. The management of the Project claimed that they did it in the couple of the cases, but I did not have any written evidence on the website.
  - The Consortium -increased the human and infrastructural capacities of 4 countries in the field of QA in 3rd cycle education by:
    - advancing the quality of human resources by training many people from different target groups (academics and supervisors, professionals in doctoral education, administrative staff in doctoral education);
    - improving equipment infrastructure and making it fully functional for the EQA and IQA bodies.
    - enhancing awareness of the necessity of using QAS methodology for 3 cycle of education among responsible bodies as well as higher academic communities of the partner countries .
  - By intensive dissemination activities the C3QA project highlighted a new field in 3 cycle (doctoral) education system of Armenia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Mongolia. The Consortium implemented many workshops, seminars and trainings on the topic of QA for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle of education.

- The Consortium gave a valuable contribution to the development of the QA in a broader perspective.
- My assessment of the project website is very positive. I like with the site interface in terms of style, font, and layout. In terms of navigating the site, the site structure is clearly understood and the information that is on the site is clear, pertinent information, well-structured and classified. Loading times are excellent.
- The cooperation with stakeholders in all partner countries was very intensive and fruitful. Also, the cooperation within participating institutions is very valuable.
- By analysing and auditing **several weakness are noted**. In order to achieve full results in the further stages (I hope the project will be extended in some form) the following measures should be undertaken (or recommended):
  - Sustainability is a crucial point for the further success of C3QA idea.
  - All responsible Bodies and Agencies in target countries should fully accept the results of C3QA project and include them -in their cycle 3 regulatory acts and documents.
  - The target countries as well as other countries of the Region, should form a Council for QA of Doctoral Education that will foster and follow this type of education.
  - On national level the Committees and Bodies should be established and become fully operational.
  - On university level the Commissions for providing QA in doctoral education should be established.
  - On the university and national level the emphasis should be put on strengthening the capacities of professional and administrative staff in Doctoral Education. As it is seen from the project flow, the existing administrative and professional staff of the cycle 1 and cycle 2 are performing the job related to the cycle 3 education.
  - The opinions of PhD students should be one of the inputs for designing a more sustainable QA system.
  - The internationalisation as well as an intensive cooperation with EU or overseas partners should be continued upon the completion of the project.
  - The labour market should be animated to recognise jobs with PhD competences, as without this option the efforts in doing quality PhD education will be neglected and the number of enrolled PhD students will gradually decrease in the course of time.
  - Cooperation with industry and services are of a high importance for the project sustainability.



- C3QA project should be continued and consortium will operate upon the completion of the project.

## 7. Sources

During doing this analysis different sources were used:

1. WEB site of the C3QA Project, <https://c3-ga.com/quality-assurance-of-doctoral-studies/> including all documents and deliverables.
2. Remote working meeting with C3QA Participants, 26.09.2019.
3. Remote working meetings with project coordinator, sep-okt 2019.
4. Doctoral programmes for the European knowledge society: report on the EUA Doctoral Programmes project, 2004- 2005. EUA, Brussels, 2005.
5. Salzburg Principles, EUA, Brussels, 2005.
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8. Study on the organisation of Doctoral Programmes in EU neighboring countries.
9. Principles for Innovative Training, European Commission, Brussels, 2011.
10. PhD Training in Central- and South-East Europe: Leave to Explore - Return to Lead. The Global Round Table, Budapest, 2012.
11. Byrne, J., Jorgenson, T., Loukkola, T. Quality assurance in Doctoral Education - results of the ARDE project. EUA, Brussels, 2013.
12. Doctoral Education in Central- and South-East Europe: Follower or Leader? A Wake-Up Call. The Global Round table, Budapest, 2013.
13. Overview of Doctoral Training in the EU, Seven Principles of Innovative Doctoral Training, Models for Organising Doctoral Training, Application of the 7 Principles of Innovative Doctoral Training, Recommendations for the University of Montenegro , <http://www.redos.ac.me/Montenegro%20Tsakonias%20Dec%202016.pdf>
14. Lucas Zinner, Professionals in Doctoral Education, <https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/view/o:454303>



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Independent external assessment is completed by

In Podgorica, Montenegro, Oct 2019

Prof. dr Radovan Stojanovic

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Stojanovic'.