UCD Quality Office Practice Notes

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Practice Notes are designed to provide the UCD community with key relevant information relating to national, international and/or sectoral quality assurance and enhancement policies, guidelines, legislation and other publications. They may be based on a particular topic or theme, or provide a quick reckoner vis-à-vis relevant legislation or publication. They are intended to be used as general outline guidance in relation to the subject matter and do not constitute a definitive statement of policy and/or procedure.

European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

The *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (known as ESG) were first adopted in 2005 by European Ministers responsible for higher education, following a proposal prepared by the **European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)**, in co-operation with the **European Students' Union (ESU)**, the **European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)** and the **European University Association (EUA)**. Since 2005, considerable progress has been made in quality assurance as well as in other 'Bologna Process' action lines, such as qualification frameworks and recognition and the promotion of the use of learning outcomes. These developments have contributed to a paradigm shift towards student-centred learning and teaching, and as a result of this, the ESG were revised further in 2015.

The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education. The ESG provides guidance on key areas that are considered vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education. The ESG should be considered in a broader context that also includes qualifications frameworks, ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, all of which contribute to promoting transparency and mutual trust in higher education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The ESG are based on the following **four principles for quality assurance** in the EHEA:
1) Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;
2) Quality assurance responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students;
3) Quality assurance supports the development of a quality culture;
4) Quality assurance takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society.

The **standards** set-out agreed and accepted practice for quality assurance in higher education in the EHEA and should, therefore, be taken account and adhered to by all higher education providers. The **guidelines** explain why the standard is important and describe how standards might be implemented.

The ESG contain three parts:

> * Internal quality assurance
> * External quality assurance
> * Quality assurance agencies

The sections are interlinked, however, the primary section that is relevant to UCD is **Part 1 – Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance.** Part 1 has 10 elements, as follows:

1.1 Policy for quality assurance
1.2 Design and approval of programmes
1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
1.5 Teaching staff
1.6 Learning resources and student support
1.7 Information management
1.8 Public information
1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

In accordance with the requirements set-out in the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*, **Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)** published its *Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2014) and its *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines* (2016). The Core Guidelines are informed by the European Standards and Guidelines, and they provide a basis on which education providers can themselves develop their quality assurance and enhancement procedures. As such, there is a clear linkage and cascading of best practice, from European level (via the ESG) to national level (via the Core Guidelines) to institution level (via, for example, the *UCD Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement Policy*, which was revised in 2016 to reflect updates to the ESG (2015)).