

Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN)



# Research Report

## on the Meta-Review to the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR)



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# Review on the Meta-Review to the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR)

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## ABSTRACT

With the advent of "quality era", the guarantee of the quality of educational review has more and more attracted attention of all the stakeholders. APQR, as an international, non-governmental, self-disciplined constraint and regulation activity for the QAAs, has played an important role in reviewing quality assurance. Firstly, this research makes a comparative analysis of APQR review of 8 QAA acceptance onto APQR under 11 criteria. Secondly, based on the "Survey of APQR Review Status", "satisfaction level" of the APQR review is analyzed. Finally, on the basis of the above, it summarizes the experiences that can be used for reference and the spaces for APQR improvement. It is found that APQR review conforms to the concept of "the fourth generation review": (1) from the review basis, APQR is a dynamic review under constructivism; (2) from the review focus, APQR focuses on three aspects: openness, inclusive and credibility of the QAAs; (3) from the review results, APQR is flexible to have four levels of comprehensive review. Therefore, APQR has the review experiences that can be used for reference, but there are still some spaces to be improved in order to better achieve the goal of APQR sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Asia Pacific Quality Register (APQR); meta-review; quality assurance; review of sustainable development

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# Review on the Meta-Review to the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR)

## Executive Summary

In recent years, the third-party quality assurance agencies (QAAs) and educational review agencies emerge in endlessly, and the quality of the QAAs is uneven and different. It arouses public concerns about the questions as: "is the QAA qualified?" "does the review conducted by the QAA meet QA criterion?" etc.

"Register" is a new project of global quality assurance(QA) in higher education(HE). The European quality assurance register system is the first attempt and practice. After the establishment of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in Europe, the Asia-Pacific Region also learned from its relevant experiences to develop the register system. "Asia Pacific Quality Register (APQR)" refers to an international, non-governmental, self-disciplined constraint and regulation activity for the QAAs. review agencies such as EQAR will recognize or evaluate the QAAs based on the criterion and procedures. After the review, the recognized QAA can be accepted onto "Quality Register". This project endorsed by the APQR Council in 2021 focuses on "meta-review"<sup>①</sup> or "re-examination" of the APQR implementation occurred in the past six years, summarizes the review experiences and explores the sustainable development of the APQR.

## I. Comparison of eight QAAs accepted onto APQR

APQR officially began its first APQR review in June 23-25, 2015. The three-day site-review was conducted to Fiji Higher Education Council (FHEC) by a well-known review panel. This "first milestone review" has opened the way for APQR to carry out the register review system in the Asia-Pacific Region. From 2015 to 2020, APQR has reviewed eight QAAs from six countries (see Table 1).

Table 1 List of the eight QAAs accepted onto APQR

#	Country	Name of the Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs)	Review Time
1	Fiji	Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC)	2015
2	Russia	Russian Register (RR)	2017

<sup>①</sup> Meta-review, is the review of the review itself, which aims to standardize all kinds of review/evaluation/review activities, find their problems and deviations, and improve the quality and guarantee the quality of the QAAs.

3	Russia	National Centre for Public review(NCPA)	2017
4	Indonesia	Indonesian review Agency for Higher Education in Health (IAAHEH)	2018
5	Kazakhstan	Eurasian Centre for review and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care (ECAQA) in Kazakhstan	2019
6	Mongolia	Mongolian National Council for Education review (MNCEA)	2019
7	Kazakhstan	Independent Agency for review and Rating (IAAR) in Kazakhstan	2019
8	Malaysia	Finance review Agency (FAA) in Malaysia	2020

Source: APQR REGISTER. [EB/OL][2021-10-25].<https://www.APQR.co/register/view-as-a-list>.

Based on the 11 review criteria of APQR, this research carried out "meta review" with 8 Self-Review Report (SRR) provided by the 8 QAAs and the 8 APQR review reports completed by the review panel; at the same time, supplemented by a survey entitled "APQN Review Status" and some in-deep interviews.

### 1.1 Review basis: dynamic review under constructivism

The review basis is an important factor for the reliability of the APQR review. In order to make a more objective and fair decisions, the review panel uses as much information and records as possible under each criteria to present fuller and more credible results. In the eight APQR review reports, the review basis of the review results of each criterion are stated as the followings (see Table 2).

Table 2 Review basis of 11 criteria of the APQR review

#	Criterion	Evidences
1	QAA Category	Self-Review Report (SRR) Legislative status Review certificate Records of site-review and interviews
2	Operations	Self-Review Report (SRR) Legislative status National laws on review Documents of the QAA's review/evaluation activities
3	Mission and Objectives	Self-Review Report (SRR)
4	Staff and Reviewers	Q AA's constitutions or documents
5	Independence	Records of site-review and interviews
6	Resources	
7	Process and Criteria	
8	Appeals	Self-Review Report (SRR) Appeal legislation Appeal documents Records of site-review and interviews

9	Quality Assurance	Self-Review Report (SRR)
10	Monitoring and review	Relevant documents Records of site-review and interviews
11	Agency Linkages	Self-Review Report (SRR) Documents of the QAA cooperation and linkages Public information available to the Panel, e.g. APQN website Records of site-review and interviews

Source: APQR review panel. APQR Review Report of Certification Association "Russian Register" [Z]. Review materials of the APQR review, 2018-05.

The APQR review shows the following 3 characteristics:

**1. Review concept: constructive review**

APQR review has been carrying out the concept of "multi-party construction", and believes that the review is not static, but constantly generated according to the individual characteristics and conditions of the QAA. Therefore, APQR insists on dynamic review, pays attention to the latest documents of the QAA and the historical overview of the QAA at all times when conducting on-site review. Realizing goal of the combination of comprehensive understanding and key elements.<sup>①</sup>

**2. Review subject: mutually negotiable review.**

"Co-construction" is the essence of the fourth generation review concept, and "negotiation" is the process of the fourth generation review concept. Due to the differences of values and positions of all parties, the review based on a single value judgment is often biased and unreasonable. Therefore, in the APQR review process, the review panel not only pay attention to the Self-Review Report (SRR) of the QAA, but also the observations and interviews of the panel during the on-site review, which shows that APQR focuses on the concept and proof of both the QAA and the APQR review panel, so as to obtain objective and fair review results, effectively help the QAAs to improve their quality and realize their sustainable development.

**3. Review method: combining quality method with quantity method**

The main basis of the APQR review comes from two aspects, one is the Self-Review Report and related documents; the other is the interview records and supporting evidences during the on-site review. The review not only pays attention to the quantitative data obtained from the SER and related documents, but also to the qualitative records obtained from the observations and interviews during the on-site review. Combine quality method with quantity method to make efficient and reasonable review decisions. On the basis of quantity method, APQR emphasizes the use of surveys, interviews, observations and other ways to evaluate, and implements the "constructive review concept" in the fourth generation review.

**1.2 Review focus: openness, inclusive and credibility**

In order to reach the goal of combining "standardization" with "flexibility",

<sup>①</sup> Jagannath Patil, Zhang Jianxin. Who will guarantee the quality of the QAAs in higher education? Practical Exploration of the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR) in the Asia-Pacific Region [J]. Shanghai Education review Research, 2016,5(02):47-52.

APQR clearly elaborates the requirements of meeting the criterion. The specific observation points need to be determined according to the Self-Review Report of the QAA and the on-site visit status of the panel. The SERs and documents prepared by the eight QAAs mainly includes the following 11 criteria.

Table 3 Key points of APQR review criterion

#	Criterion	Observation Points
1	Organization Category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Legislative status and legal authority</li> <li>2) The QAA's remit</li> <li>3) Authorized and recognized status</li> <li>4) Relationship with the Ministry of Education</li> <li>1) Broad range of the stakeholders</li> </ul>
2	Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) QA principle</li> <li>2) QA standard</li> <li>3) QA operation</li> <li>4) QA period</li> </ul>
3	Mission and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Clear articulation</li> <li>2) Being open and transparent</li> <li>3) Common understanding with stakeholders</li> <li>4) Improvement to quality assurance</li> </ul>
4	Staff and Reviewers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Selection policy of staff and evaluators</li> <li>2) Fitness of professional background and job</li> <li>3) Number and performance of staff and evaluators</li> <li>4) Professional development policy and programme</li> <li>5) Number and effectiveness of professional training</li> <li>6) International exchange and cooperation</li> <li>7) Stakeholders' engagement in QA</li> </ul>
5	Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Structure and function</li> <li>2) Financial independence</li> <li>3) Evaluators' independence</li> <li>4) Independence of decision-makers</li> </ul>
6	Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Adequacy of human resources and finance</li> <li>2) Guarantee mechanism for human resources, administration and allocation</li> <li>3) Information resources, electronic resources, etc;</li> <li>4) Resource cooperation and sharing</li> </ul>
7	Process and Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Clarity of review/review procedure</li> <li>2) Clarity of criteria/ criteria</li> <li>3) Perfection of review/review procedure</li> <li>4) Being open and transparent</li> </ul>
8	Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Stakeholders' understanding</li> <li>2) Appeal transparency</li> </ul>

		3) Appeal standardization 4) Appeal independence 5) Appeal and Records
9	Quality Assurance	1) Records and procedures of internal QA 2) Compliance to internal QA 3) Updating the records of the internal QA 4) Improvement of internal QA
10	Monitoring and Review	1) Regular publication of review/ review reports 2) Platform to provide information 3) Providing consulting services for HEIs 4) Providing information and consultation for experts; 5) Training of evaluators and QA experts
11	Agency Linkages	1) Goal of exchange and cooperation 2) Policy of exchange and cooperation 3) Number and regions of cooperating QAAs 4) Collaboration with stakeholders

From the perspective of the focus of the APQR review, the following 3 characteristics shows :

**1. Keep the initial goal in mind: being committed to quality improvement**

In the APQR review, all 11 criteria are reviewed with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of education, and the degree to which the QAAs improve the local education quality is observed. For example, when reviewing the criterion of "Operation of the QAA",the panel concerns the cooperation between the QAA and the Ministry of Education(MoE), higher education institutions (HEIs) and other educational providers. When reviewing the criterion of "Organization Category", the panel carefully examines the QA principles, criterion and implementation activities of the QAA. When reviewing the criterion of "Mission and objectives", it is very important to examine whether the QAA aims at quality improvement.

**2. All-inclusive: stakeholders' participation**

When one educational QAA is reviewed , the review panel pays very close attention to the stakeholders' participation under various review criteria. For example, when reviewing the criterion of "mission and objectives", it emphasizes the value coordination of various stakeholders. When reviewing the criterion of "Staff and Reviewer", the panel emphasizes the importance of stakeholders' participation in the review. Particularly, in the ECAQA site review, students' participation in the quality assurance of higher education was greatly appreciated.<sup>①</sup> When reviewing the criterion of "Appeals", the panel explores the appeal procedure and the right for the stakeholders to know. When reviewing the criterion of "Agency Linkages", the panel pays special attention to the cooperation and exchange of the supporting evidences between the QAA and various stakeholders.

<sup>①</sup> Xiang Zhijie, Zhang Jianxin, Huang Panpan. Research on the participation of ECAQA students in higher education quality assurance in Kazakhstan [J]. Shanghai Education review Research, 2021,10 (03): 42-47. .

### **3. Openness and transparency: establishing and enhancing public trust**

As a cross-regional QA review project, APQR requires the QAAs to have credibility. For this reason, APQR specifically requires the QAAs to make information public and update it regularly. For example, when reviewing the criterion of "Mission and Objectives", the panel emphasizes that the content should be open and transparent. When reviewing the criterion of "Process and Criteria", the panel emphasizes the openness of the procedures and criterion of the QAA in their routine QA activities, so as to ensure impartiality. In the review the criterion of "Monitoring and review", it is emphasized that the QAA should disclose its information and regularly issue the updated information and reports as well as to establish a special portal website to disclose information.

#### **1.3 Review results: four levels of comprehensive review**

The final decision of APQR is determined by the review results of 11 criteria. Only when the QAA meets 11 criteria can it be finally recognized. The results of 11 criteria are classified into four levels. Acceptance onto APQR requires "Substantial Compliance" with these criteria. Each criterion will be judged "Full Compliance Substantial Compliance Partial Compliance Or Non-Compliant"; and substantial compliance with the whole set needs full or substantial compliance with each criterion.

The 8 QAAs mentioned above have all accepted onto APQR. All of the QAAs have been judged as "Substantial Compliance", but have not reached "Full Compliance" at present, which indicates that all the eight QAAs have space for improvement. Among the 11 criteria, most of the 8 QAAs have reached "Full Compliance" at the 2 criteria of "Operations" and "Agency Linkages", which indicates that each QAA is more standardized in internal management, cooperation and communication; while among the 3 criteria of "Organization Category", "Staff and Reviewers" and "Process and Criteria", fewer have reached "Full Compliance", which indicates that most QAAs need continuous improvement.

## **II. Meta-review of the APQR review based on the Survey**

Delphi Method (also known as "expert survey method") was used to design "Survey of the APQR Review Status" by soliciting the opinions of relevant experts four times through the research path of "sorting, induction-statistics, feedback, re-solicitation, re-focus, re-feedback, consensus". The survey investigates the 3 main bodies of the QAAs, the review panelists and the members of APQR Council (AC). In total the research got 11 valid respondents among 16 samples. The survey is made up of 5 dimensions: "purpose, standard, procedure, sustainable development and improvement". The questions are mainly matrix ones, and the answers are set with 3 options: "satisfactory, average and unsatisfactory". At the same time, the survey also set up an open question to collect the suggestions for improvement.

### **2.1 Review objectives: the common "initial goal" of both parties.**

The survey results show that all review panelists, QAAs and review panelists

confirm the 4 review objectives of APQR, but there are “satisfaction” differences.

### **1. Appropriateness to review objectives**

The APQR review is carried out for the purpose of “appropriateness”, so it is an important basis to judge the review effectiveness by examining whether the review has achieved the present goal. For the question of "How much do you think APQR review has achieved its goal?" , 7 out of the 11 valid respondents agreed "satisfaction", 2 chose "average", and 1 chose "unsatisfied". This shows that not all the respondents agree that APQR review has fully achieved its objectives to some extent. So APQR needs to further consider how to implement the objectives in the future review.

### **2. Similarity of the QAAs**

Only when the goal of APQR is in the same direction as that of most QAAs will it attract more and more QAAs to register for APQR, and APQR can further get developed accordingly. For the question of "Do you think the goal of APQR is in the same direction as that of the QAA ?" , 10 agreed "Satisfaction", and only 1 selected "Average". In the interviews of the 3 panelists, only 2 panelists expressed "satisfaction" and 1 expressed "average". This shows that the panelists with their rich professional knowledge and QA experiences, think that APQR should give more consideration to the value of the stakeholders in setting its goals, develop and update the purpose from the perspective of various stakeholders.

## **2.2 Review criteria: identify the “pathogeny to prescribe the right medicine”**

For the question of "Do you approve of the APQR review criteria?" and "Do you think the APQR criteria design is clearly oriented to goal?", all the respondents agreed "satisfaction". This shows that 11 APQR criteria have been approved by all the stakeholders. In particular, the recognition of the panelists with rich professional knowledge and QA experiences is even more valuable. However, respondents believe that the criteria still has some space for improvement.

### **1. Comprehensive and systematic review criteria**

To examine the comprehensiveness and systematicness of the APQR criteria from the perspective of various stakeholders, the survey is aimed at the question of "Do you think the review criteria can comprehensively and systematically evaluate the work of your QAA ?". 7 respondents chose "satisfaction", and 4 chose "average", which shows that 3 quarters of the respondents think that the criterion need to be further revised and improved, according to the status and characteristics of the QAAs. In order to comprehensively and systematically review the QAAs, closer consultation and interview with QAAs should be strengthened, and more qualitative review methods should be adopted to obtain more comprehensive and in-depth information.

### **2. Diagnostic nature of the review criteria**

"Promoting the QAA reform by reviewing" and "combining review with guidance" have always been APQR review philosophy. In order to explore whether APQR criteria

can effectively and objectively reviewed the QAAs and accurately guide the QAAs, the survey asked the question of "Do you think the APQR criteria reflect the major achievements and shortcomings of the QAAs?". Except for 1 AC member who chose "non-satisfaction", all others expressed "satisfaction". This shows that: (1) APQR has a strong sense of self-reflection; (2) APQR diagnostic ability is satisfactory to a certain extent; (3) APQR needs to summarize more good experiences from the QAAs and promote them. In order to strengthen the self-development of the QAAs by reviewing, APQR needs to give more targeted and tailed suggestions for the QAA development in the future

### **2.3 Review procedure: standardized but flexible**

The survey results show that the 3 subjects are satisfied with the review procedure. The respondents expressed "satisfaction" with the "overall satisfaction", "objectivity", "systematicness" and "reliability". This shows that APQR review procedure can meet the goal of "objectivity and reliability". During the whole review process, the selection of the review panelists, the quantitative investigation before the review, the qualitative analysis during the review and the constructive feedback after the review have formed a tight and flexible closed loop. APQR review is based entirely on "evidence" and "characteristics", which has maximized the effectiveness of the APQR review.

#### **2.4 Review result: sustainable development**

##### **1. Combine short-term development with long-term development**

In order to achieve the review of sustainable development, APQR tries to combine the short-term development with the long-term development direction of the QAAs. While reviewing the "history" of the QAA, APQR makes great efforts to devote itself to guide the "future". For the question of "Do you think the review can combine the short-term development with the long-term development of the QAA?" 8 agreed "satisfaction", while still 2 from the QAAs chose "average". This shows that from the perspective of the QAAs, they still think that their short-and-long term development has not reached a satisfactory level. The guiding opinions of the APQR review on the future development of the QAAs need to be further refined and appropriate. At the later stage of the review, more feedback and consultations are needed to ensure that the problems of the QAAs can be solved.

##### **2. Self-examination to sustainable development**

APQR review adheres to the principle of "combining review with guidance", which not only requires the review of the development status of the QAA, but also finds out the problems existing in the current development of the QAA, and puts forward more constructive suggestions based on the problems. Therefore, the QAAs reflect on problems and opinions and realize the review of sustainable development. For the question of "Do you think the review and meta-review can promote the self-examination, improvement and sustainable development of your QAA?" , except for the 2 QAAs who chose "average", the others all expressed "satisfaction". This shows that in the opinions of the review party (including AI members and the review

panelists), the APQR review can promote the QAAs to self-examination and achieve sustainable development. However, the QAAsatisfaction is relatively low. The possible reasons are as follows: (1) the feedback of the problems is not appropriate to the actual situation of the QAA; (2) It is difficult for the QAA to effectively solve the problems; (3) the improvement feedback of the QAA has not been effectively confirmed. APQR needs to consult with the QAA to clarify the problems and improve them.

### **3. Internationalization of quality assurance in higher education**

Internationalization of higher education is an issue of the times. Internationalization of quality assurance is an indispensable part of the reform and development of higher education. It is not only the inevitable outcome of the development of globalized society, but also an important symbol of the core competitiveness of higher education. For the question of "Do you think the APQR review can help to promote internationalization of quality assurance in higher education in the Asia-Pacific Region?" Except for 2 respondents from the QAAs who chose "average", the others all agreed "satisfaction". This shows that APQR review should be focused on QA internationalization in addition to review criterion, and more efforts should be made in improvement suggestions, future promotion and QA internationalization of the APQR itself.

### **4. Combine qualitative method with quantitative method**

APQR review has always adhered to the review method of "combining qualitative method with quantitative method", which not only pays attention to the analysis of the report data, but also combines the interviews and observations of on-site review. For the question of "Do you think APQR adopts a combination of qualitative method and quantitative method to help get more real and effective results?" All the survey respondents agreed "satisfaction", which indicates that the method of combination is more conducive to the comprehensiveness and authenticity of the review. APQR should maintain and continuously upgrade this review method in the future.

### **5. Individually tailed characteristic review**

"Individually tailed characteristic review" is the advocacy concept of the fourth generation review, and the "co-constructive value" of both parties has become the key element of review. In order to make a more comprehensive review of the QAAs, APQR review follows this development concept and is based on the comprehensive review of the QAAs. APQR conducts the Individually tailed characteristic review with 11 criteria to the QAA. For the question of "Do you think APQR emphasizes individually tailed characteristic review?" 7 respondents agreed "satisfaction" while 4 chose "average". It is both new and correct to pursue individually tailed characteristics and weaken the normalization of the criterion. However, in APQR review, regional, national and QA organizational purposes, functions and other characteristic factors should be concerned, and review on the basis of "evidence" and "performance" should be insisted, which is extremely demanding for the review panelists and even the AC members who are the important and last gatekeepers. It can be said that the characteristic review is a "long-way-to-go" process.

On the whole, the satisfaction of the APQR review is high, except for one APQR

review panelist, all the others agreed "satisfaction". This shows that the AC members and the QAAs are satisfied with the overall performance of the APQR review. From a more professional point of view, APQR review still needs to be further improved. Therefore, APQR has many good experiences worth learning from, and it needs to be further improved according to the development of the changing world, such as new methods of quality assurance under the COVID-19 since 2021.

### **III. Analysis of advantages and disadvantages of APQR sustainable development**

In order to promote the sustainable development of APQR in the future, it is urgent for APQR to have "meta-review" or "re-examination" to the implementations in the past six years, carry forward the good experiences, find out the shortcomings to improve so as to make contributions to good quality assurance in the Asia-Pacific Region.

#### **3.1 Summary: advantages and characteristics of the APQR review**

The concept of the fourth generation review emphasizes "development" instead of "confirmation". From the analysis of the APQR review itself, the analysis of the APQR review under 11 criteria and the survey, the development of APQR in the past six years has many points worth learning.

##### **1. Review concept: to underline the importance to "developmental review" and emphasize "promoting reforms by review"**

The essence of the fourth generation review emphasizes the process of construction and re-construction, i.e. from "the summative review" focusing on results to "the developmental review" focusing on diagnosis." APQR adheres to the principle of "combining review with guidance" in the whole process. It not only points out the QAA spaces for further improvement under 11 criteria, but also points out the QAA development advantages and the spaces for improvement at the last part of "the APQR Review Report": "Advantages and Suggestions". Therefore, APQR attaches importance to developmental review and emphasizes the developmental function of the APQR review.

##### **2. Review process: multi-parties' participation and equal negotiation**

The fourth generation review concept emphasizes the participation of all the stakeholders in the review process, and the review should take into account various values. In the whole review process, the decision depends entirely on "evidences" and "performances", which not only attaches importance to the APQR review itself, but also to self-review of the QAAs. At the same time, when APQR conducts the review, the QAAs have a high degree of active participation in the information provision, explanations during the on-site review and wrap-up meetings. It can be said that the APQR review is based on multi-parties' participation and equal negotiation.

### **3. Review result: being committed to sustainable development**

For the QAAs that engage in only educational review, adequate financial guarantee and sufficient projects are the key to their survival. This requires the QAAs themselves to continuously improve their credibility and operational efficiency, so as to ensure the sustainable development of the QAAs. APQR review is also committed to "promoting reforms through review", and makes suggestions on the operations and review activities of the QAAs, so as to realize the continuous improvement of the QAAs themselves and achieve sustainable development.

### **3.2 Reflection and improvements: suggestions for the APQR**

#### **review**

APQR not only promotes the sustainable development of the QAAs, but also needs to constantly reflect and improve in order to promote its own sustainable development, so as to realize APQR's mission of "enhancing the quality of higher education in the Asia-Pacific Region"(APQR Constitution, 2019). In order to further clarify the problems existing in the APQR review for further improvement, "Suggestions for Improvement of APQR" is added at Part three of the survey. Based on the results of the survey and the analysis of the APQR reviews, the main suggestions are as follows:

#### **1. To get the supports and permissions from the governments of various countries to improve the APQR relevance in quality assurance**

In the survey, the respondents from the QAAs pointed out that APQR should cooperate with governments, HEIs and other stakeholders in various countries as much as possible to improve the recognition and relevance of APQR. This will attract more QAAs from various countries to apply for APQR, to ensure its sustainable development from the implementation.

#### **2. To increase the feedback links after the review and to improve the follow-up procedure**

"A review is not the end, but a new beginning." During the review, the APQR review panel analyzed the shortcomings of 11 criteria of various QAAs, and gave feedback on the improvement methods in the future. At the same time, APQR also set the validity period of the review. However, after the review, there is a lack of follow-up procedures to review the improvement quality and status of the QAAs, which leads to a great discount on the initially intended effect of "promoting reforms by review" and development function. Therefore, the APQR Council needs to improve the feedback links after the review and incorporate it into the formal review procedure.

#### **3. To improve the organization category of recognized QAAs**

At present, APQR mainly recognizes the the QAAs who are engaged in evaluation/review/accreditation of QA activities. In the survey, some pointed out that APQR should also include other QAAs such as research institutions engaged in educational QA, in university ranking, etc. Thereby expanding the coverage scope of APQR, further realizing the review of sustainable development and improving the

quality of higher education in the Asia-Pacific Region.

#### **4. To add the APQR online review**

With the outbreak of COVID-19, it is difficult to conduct site visit of the APQR review. The COVID-19 pandemic became the biggest obstacle to the development of APQR. In order to achieve sustainable development, APQR needs to add online review method as soon as possible. To update the criterion suitable for online review, learn and incorporate more online survey techniques. This is not only a great challenge for AC, but also a difficult problem for the APQR review panelists.

### **Conclusion**

During the 6-year review process, the APQR Council, the review panelists and the QAAs made great efforts to cooperate and negotiate with each other. The concept of "developmental review" based on the fourth generation review yielded numerous satisfactory results. However, with the outbreak and "continuation" of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has brought unprecedented crisis and challenges to APQR sustainable development. This research has conducted "meta-review"/"re-examined" the APQR review in the past six years, summed up and optimized the good experiences, summarized and analyzed the problems existing in the review, and put forward future improvement suggestions. We believe, with the continuous efforts of experts, council members and staff, we can continue to contribute to quality assurance of higher education in the Asia-Pacific Region and witness the bright future of higher education in the Asia-Pacific Region.

## Annex

### Annex 1: Survey on the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR)

Dear Sir/Madam,

The first review of the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR) was conducted in 2015. In the past five years, APQR has made remarkable achievements: eight educational quality assurance agencies (QAAs) from six countries have been accepted onto the register. In order to promote the sustainable development of APQR in the future, this survey wants to know your opinions from the eight QAAs and experts who have conducted the AOQR aiming to “re-examine” the APQR review in the past six years, and seek sustainable development in the future. Thank you very much for your support. Let’ make our contribution to the improvement of education quality in the Asia-Pacific Region!

APQR Research Group  
January 6, 2021

#### 1. You are:

A: Staff member from QAAs on APQR    B: Review expert    C. Member of APQR Council

2. **APQR purposes:** please choose and tick one "√" to the following statements, "3": agree; "2": neutral; "1":disagree.

*Kind reminding of the APQR purposes:*

#	Purpose
1	Provide an inspirational target
2	Serve as a quality hallmark and qualification to accredit HEIs/programs
3	Provide a basis for mutual recognition of cross-border operations of QAAs and HEIs
4	Offer a reference to global stakeholders on trustworthy external QAAs in in the Asia-Pacific Region

Question	3	2	1
1.Do you agree with the APQR purposes?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
2. Do you think the APQR review has achieved its purposes?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
3. Do you think the purposes of APQR are aligned with those of your QAA?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree

3. **APQR criteria:** please choose and tick one "√" to the following statements, "3": agree; "2": neutral; "1":disagree.

*Note: Kind reminding of the APQR purposes:*

Criterion	Description
1. Organization	The QAA is a full member of APQN or is a QA body which is valid entity recognized by the appropriate authority in the relevant country/territory/region, and is accountable to stakeholders.
2.Operations	The quality assurance agency undertakes quality assurance activities (at institutional and/or program level) on a cyclical basis.

3. Mission and Objectives	The mission statement and objectives of the agency are understood consistently by its stakeholders.
4. Staff and reviewers	The profile of the agency staff and the profile of the reviewers the agency uses are consistent with the Mission Statement.
5. Independence	The quality assurance agency is independent and has autonomous responsibility for its QA operations. The judgments and recommendations of the agency's reports cannot be changed by third parties.
6. Resources	The agency has sufficient resources to run its operations in accordance with its mission statement and objectives.
7. Process and Criteria	The description of the processes and criteria applied by the agency are transparent and publicly available and normally include: self-review , site visit, public report and follow-up measure. The published standards and criteria are applied consistently and rigorously.
8. Appeals	An appeals mechanism is available for the institutions.
9. Quality Assurance	The agency has effective quality assurance measures in place to monitor itself and is subject to occasional review.
10. Monitoring and Review	The agency undertakes research on internal and external quality assurance and provides information and advice to the higher education institutions.
11. Agency Linkages	The agency cooperates and collaborates with other agencies and key players across national borders.

Question	3	2	1
1. Do you agree with the review criteria of APQR?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
2. Do you think the criteria design is oriented to clear objectives?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
3. Do you think the design of the criteria can comprehensively and systematically review your QAA?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
4. Do you think the APQR criteria can demonstrate the advantage and disadvantage of your QAA?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree

**4. The APQR procedure:** please choose and tick one "√" to the following statements, "3": agree; "2": neutral; "1":disagree.

*Note: Kind reminding of the APQR procedures*

#	Target
1	Expression of interest(EoI) by the QAA
2	Acceptance of eligibility by the APQR Council
3	Self-Review Report (SER) by the QAA
4	Desk Review of SER by the APQR review panel
5	On-Site Visit by the APQR review panel: Validation of SER; Qualitative and quantitative review
6	Finalizing the external review report by the APQR review panel and approved by the QAA
7	Outcome by the APQR Council

Question	3	2	1
1. Do you agree with the review procedure of APQR?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
2. Do you think the review process is objective and	Agree	Neutral	Disagree

systematic?			
3. Do you think the review process of APQR is completely based on evidence and all kinds of documents?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
4. Do you think the data required for the review process is accessible, transparent, and understandable?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree

**5. APQR sustainable development:** please choose and tick one "√" to the following statements, "3": agree; "2": neutral; "1":disagree.

Question	3	2	1
1. Do you think the review combines the short-term development with the long-term development of your QAA?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
2. Do you think this survey can promote the reflection, improvement and sustainable development of your QAA?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
3. Do you think that the review will contribute to the internationalization of higher education in the Asia Pacific region?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
4. Do you think that the combination of qualitative and quantitative review of APQR is helpful for real and effective result?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
5. Do you think APQR emphasizes personalized and characteristic review?	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
6. What do you think of APQR	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied

## 6. Open questions

What are your suggestions for improvement of APQR review?

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Thank you for your support! Let's look forward to the bright future of education quality in the Asia-Pacific Region!

## Annex 2: Name List of the APQR Survey

Category	Country	Name	Position
Agencies	FHEC	Public IT contact	
		APQN	
		Mrs. Salote Rabuka	Director General
		Ms. Malini Nair	Contact person:
	RR	Public IT contact	
		Arkady Vladimirtsev	Director General
		Vera Azaryeva	Contact person
	NCPA	Public IT contact	
		Dr. Galina Motova	Contact person Deputy Director
	IAAHEH	Public IT contact	
		Prof. Usman Chatib Warsa, M.D., Ph.D	Director / Chairman
	ECAQA	Public IT contact	
		Prof. Saule Sarsenbayeva	Director / Chairman Contact person
	MNCEA	Batsuuri Khaltar	Contact person
IAAR	Public IT contact		
	Dr. Timur Kanapyanov	Contact person	
FAA	Public IT contact		
	Dr. Eddy Chong Siong Choy	Contact person	
APQR COUNCIL	India	Dr. Jagannath Pati	APQR Chairperson
	Taiwan/Chinese Taipei	YUNG-CHI HOU	APQR Co-Chairperson
	China	Jianxin Zhang	APQR Member
	Papua New Guinea	Jeanette Baird	APQR Member
	China	Mr. Libing Wang	APQR Member
	Sri Lanka	Deepthi Bandar	APQR Member
Review Panel Member	Kazakhstan	Dr. Farida Nurmanbetova	Kazakh Russian Medical University
	France	Prof Colin N Peiris	Former Vice chair of the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG), Professor at Université Paris EstCréteil and Former AIU Board member
	Netherlands	Dr Mark Frederiks	NVAO
	India	Mrs Rachel George	Deputy Registrar of Maharashtra Nursing Council
	Indonesia	Dr. Rr. Titi Savitri Prihatiningsih	Professor of Department of Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine Universitas Gadjah Mada.
	India	Vd. Jayant Deopujari	President of the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM), Ministry of AYUSH,
	Japan	Prof. Rie Mori	Professor of the National Institute for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education (NIAD-QE)
	United States	Dr. Diana Hallerud	Associate Director of Accreditation, Accreditation Council for Business

			Schools and Programs (ACBSP)
	Estonia	Dr. Maiki Udam	Director of Development and International Cooperation, Project Coordinator, EKKA, Estonia; Former Board Director of INQAAHE
	Russia	Oksana MATVEEVA	Deputy Head of Accreditation Office of the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA)
	Japan	Professor Syun Tutiya	Professor of the National Institute for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education (NIAD-QE)
	Russia	Dr Elena Savinykh	Head of the Methodology Department, National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA)
Total		32	

## Annex 3: Approval of the Research on APQR in 2021

(The proposal has been endorsed by the APQR Council on March 26 and got the endorsement of APQN Finance Committee on March 30, 2021)

The Asia-Pacific Quality Resister (APQR) began its pilot review to Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) in Sri Lanka in June 2013. The first formal review for APQR was conducted on the Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) in Fiji in June 2015. As far 2020, APQR has reviewed 8 QAAs, such as National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA), Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care (ECAQA) and others. But unfortunately, there is no research/evaluation on APQR's 6-year development and its sustainable development.

At the online meeting of the APQR Council held on Dec. 10, 2020, it was agreed that Research on the Asia-Pacific Quality Resister (APQR) (Code No.: APQR2021-01) would be conducted by Zhijie Xiang (graduate student in Yunnan University) with the guidance of Jianxin Zhang. In order to enhance the capacity-building and promote the sustainability of APQR, according to "APQN Procedures Manual", here is the research proposal.

### **I. Research Context**

In recent years, third-party quality accreditation agencies (QAAs) have emerged in an endless stream, but the quality of various QAAs is of difference, which has aroused the doubts and questions on QAAs' qualifications.

APQR is a register of external quality assurance agencies (EQAAs) that demonstrated certain thresholds of maturity. An independent external review by peers is the backbone of the APQR. Since its first initiative review in 2015, it has 6-year accreditation history to EQAAs in the Asia Pacific Region. For the strategic and sustainable development of APQR in the future, it is necessary to systematically and thoroughly research and "re-review" APQR's 6-year review through summaries and reflections, and to provide directional guidance for APQR's future sustainable development.

### **II. Purpose**

The purpose is to: 1) to analyze of APQR Review; 2)to re-review of APQR 6-year development; 3) to improve APQR.

### **III. Framework**

The research framework is divided into four aspects: 1) analysis of the implementation of global meta-evaluation; 2) overview of APQR; 3) analysis of APQR review, and 4) "re-review" of APQR.

### **IV. Methodology**

This research will conduct systematic research with four basic research methods: 1) Literature analysis; 2) Comparative research; 3) Questionnaire survey; 4) Interview.

### **V. Development**

**1. Funding:** The chairperson of the APQR Council suggests that APQN would fund APQR research project from small savings of APQR with 1000 USD, so APQR can pay a little honorarium to the research staff and Mr. Umesh who is helping in all APQR work and so far APQR did not pay him.

**2. Leaders:** Jianxin Zhang (APQN President, Member of APQR Council, YHEEC Chief Expert, Professor of Yunnan University in China), **Jagannath Patil** (APQR Chairperson)

**3. Researcher:** Zhijie Xiang (graduate student of Yunnan University, China), Jianxin Zhang, Mr. Umesh in India and other graduate students in Yunnan University, China. It is approved that Zhijie Xiang can complete her graduate dissertation based on this research project.

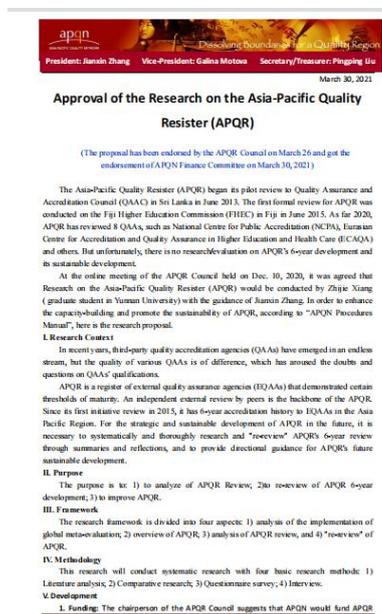
**4. Consultants:** Angela Yung Chi Hou (APQR Vice-chairperson), Jeanette Baird (APQR Member), Libing Wang (APQR Member), Colin N. Peiris (APQR Member).

**5. Results:** “Report of Research on the Asia-Pacific Quality Resister (APQR)” (about 10,000 words)

**6. Timeline:** The research cycle is expected to be completed within 14 months (April, 2021 – June, 2022).

Project Leaders: **Jianxin Zhang Jagannath Patil**

website: [www.apqn.com](http://www.apqn.com)



research project from small savings of APQR with 1000 USD, so APQR can pay a little honorarium to the research staff and Mr. Umesh who is helping in all APQR work and so far APQR did not pay him.

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Project Leaders: 

website: [www.apqn.com](http://www.apqn.com)



## Annex 4: Author Introduction

### ***Zhijie Xiang***

Ms. Zhijie Xiang is PhD candidate and graduate student at the Research Institute of Higher Education (RIHE), Yunnan University, China. Her major is in comparative education. She graduated from Hainan Normal University with a bachelor degree in Pedagogy in 2019. She has conducted research focusing on higher education and educational quality assurance.



### ***Jianxin Zhang***



Prof. Dr. Jianxin Zhang is the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> President of Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), professor of Yunnan University and Chief Expert of Yunnan Higher Education Evaluation Centre (YHEEC). She obtained PhD degree at Peking University in China, Master degree at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL) in Switzerland. She has been teaching for over 30 years and been actively involved in QA practices and researches, completing over 30 on-site reviews, visiting over 60 countries /territories on various academic assignments and QA matters. She has published 6 monographs such as “ASEAN Higher Education”, 4 translated books, 18 edited books and over 200 papers. Among them, 10 got the government’s awards.

### ***Jagannath Patil***

Dr. Jagannath Patil is the former APQN President (2012-2016) and APQN Board Co-opted Director, also INQAAHE President (2015-2016). He is also the founder Chairperson of Asia Pacific Quality Register (APQR). With experience of his long tenure as Adviser at National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of India. He has played key role in placing NAAC and India prominently on global quality scenario. He has coordinated Accreditation exercise of about 1500 higher educational institutions. Having visited over 50 countries, he is one of the sought after speaker in QA fraternity around the world and has delivered keynote speeches in Asia, Europe, Africa and Americas.





**Research Report**  
**on the Meta-Review to the**  
**Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR)**



**Research Project Report (May, 2022)**

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