MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between

the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, United Kingdom

and

the Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, Kazakhstan

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 Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, Office 801, 20 Dostyk Street, Nur-Sultan, Z05H9M7, Kazakhstan, hereafter referred to as IQAA

QAA and IQAA are referred to collectively as ‘both Parties’ and individually referred to as a ‘Party’.

Whereas

QAA was established in 1997. Its purpose is to maintain academic standards and enhance the quality and global reputation of UK higher education. It does this by working with higher education providers, regulatory bodies and students with the shared objective of supporting students to achieve positive educational outcomes. As a membership organisation, QAA represents and supports its university and college members, working in partnership with them to enhance the quality of their provision. 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 HE institutions.

IQAA, being established in 2008, is the first independent agency in the field of education in Kazakhstan, which developed its procedures based on the ESG. IQAA works in accordance with the general trends in the field of quality assurance of education in Europe and the national legislation of Kazakhstan. The Agency has information about the best practices in other countries. IQAA’s mission is to contribute to the improvement of quality of educational organisations and their competitiveness at the national and international levels through the quality culture development. The Agency has a constant drive to improve its procedures in accordance with best international experience, underpinned by a strong commitment to enhancement the quality of education and the development of the concept of a quality culture.
Key principles: QAA and IQAA

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 are members of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), with comparable missions and organisational objectives in the assurance of quality in higher education, and now wish to establish a closer professional relationship as equal partners within a collaborative framework.

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 IQAA, except where specifically stated.

Areas of cooperation and collaboration

To these ends, QAA and IQAA, in accordance with the framework of British and Kazakhstan 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 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, 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 Kazakhstan, supporting student mobility, and undertaking research on quality assurance related issues.

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

- Sharing experience in the field of evaluation and accreditation of HE institutions.
- Consulting on the improvement of standards and criteria of institutional accreditation.
- Mutually representing accreditation-related interests at national and international levels.
- Sharing information on QAA-led International Quality Reviews (IQR) for higher education institutions in Kazakhstan.
- Producing a report targeted to UK higher education providers on the regulatory context for TNE in Kazakhstan, including ways in which QAA and IQAA cooperating together can assist in developing TNE arrangements in Kazakhstan, securing and enhancing their quality.
- Observing each other’s quality assurance processes and undertaking quality enhancement activities such as a workshop for UK higher education providers operating or wishing to operate in Kazakhstan.
- Exploring the possibility of developing an approach to joint reviews between QAA and IQAA in English and Russian.
- Exchanging and training of quality experts.
- Sharing experience and projects relating to matters of academic integrity.
- QAA inviting one free delegate place annually to a nominated IQAA representative to attend its Annual Conference.
- IQAA inviting one free delegate from QAA to attend its Annual Eurasian Forum.
- Conducting any other cooperation activities agreed by the Parties.

If any additional costs are incurred as a result of the collaboration, agreement to progress any allocation/reimbursement of costs should be agreed between QAA and IQAA 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 IQAA retention schedules. For both QAA and IQAA, this will be up to five years.

**Intellectual Property Rights**
Any reports, notes, memoranda, records, correspondence, documents, computer and other storage, such as disks or other documents and materials used in this Memorandum,
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, Douglas Blackstock) and the Director of IQAA (at the time of signing, Sholpan Kalanova) 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 Agency 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.

Signed in the UK and Kazakhstan on **25 August 2021**.

**Signatures of the Parties:**

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**Douglas Blackstock**  
Chief Executive  
The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

**Sholpan Kalanova**  
President  
The Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA)

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