MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between

the Education Quality Assurance Agency, Azerbaijan

and

the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, United Kingdom

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is made between the Education Quality Assurance Agency, Gara Garayev Ave. 2B, AZ 1060, Baku, Azerbaijan, hereafter referred to as TKTA.

And

the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester, GL 1 1UB, hereafter referred to as QAA.

Whereas

QAA was established in 1997. QAA’s purpose is to maintain academic standards and enhance the quality and global reputation of UK higher education. QAA 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 take a leading role in international developments in standards and quality, maintaining close relationships with many international quality assurance agencies, governments and higher education institutions.

Issues on ensuring the quality of education in the Republic of Azerbaijan have been entrusted to TKTA under the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which is a legal entity of public law created by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 29th of
December, 2019 based on the abolished Office for Accreditation and Notification under the Ministry of Education.

Currently, TKTA is in the process of institutional formation and development of an expanded roadmap of its activities for organizing the processes of assessing the quality assurance of educational institutions of all levels of education. In particular, TKTA is developing a strategy for international recognition and updating regulatory documents to ensure the quality of education in accordance with international standards, especially in the field of higher education.

It is important to note that accreditation of universities has been carried out in Azerbaijan since 2005, from the moment the country joined the Bologna process. Starting this year, the accreditation of universities will be carried out based on updated guidelines and criteria and in full accordance with the recommendations of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015) in the framework of Understanding of the member countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

TKTA and QAA

Having comparable missions and institutional objectives in the quality assurance in higher education, both parties now wish to establish a closer relationship as equal partners for the purpose of creating cooperative and collaborative mechanisms for the mutual benefit of both parties.

Key principles: QAA and TKTA

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

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

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

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

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

TKTA and QAA agree through this MoU to cooperate for the benefit of both parties and to work towards establishing a strategic alliance to enhance external quality assurance in both jurisdictions and improving the quality of higher education in Azerbaijan and the UK. This MoU is not intended to create legally binding relations between the parties, and neither party has the authority to act on behalf of or otherwise bind the other party. However, TKTA and QAA agree to work together to implement this MoU in good faith.

Areas of cooperation and collaboration

To this end, TKTA and QAA, in accordance with the framework of Azerbaijani and British laws and regulations, agree to pursue the following objectives to co-operate for the benefit of both parties and to work towards establishing a strategic alliance to enhance the operation of external quality assurance in both jurisdictions and improve the quality of higher education in Azerbaijan and the United Kingdom.

(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, higher education providers operating in each jurisdiction, and about developments in each country's higher education systems, 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 expertise
Where appropriate and possible, taking account of operational constraints, draw on each other's expertise to strengthen the international dimension of institutional reviews and/or accreditations, including reviews of cross-border education.

(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 assurance of transnational education, the identification of fraudulent institutions, awarding bodies or accrediting agencies in Azerbaijan and in the UK, supporting student mobility, and undertaking research on quality assurance related issues.

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

- Sharing experiences regarding evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions
- Consulting on the improvement of standards and the criteria for institutional accreditation
- Mutually representing accreditation-related interests at national and international levels
- Exploring opportunities for joint accreditation and higher education review activity of provision in Azerbaijan
- Producing a report targeted to UK providers on the higher education landscape and context for TNE in Azerbaijan, and exploring ways in which QAA and TKTA can collaborate to support the development of TNE arrangements in Azerbaijan
- Observing each other's quality assurance processes and undertaking quality enhancement activities
- Developing a UK study visit for TKTA colleagues to support familiarisation with QAA and approaches to internal quality assurance in UK institutions
- Seeking opportunities for fundraising for joint projects
- Exchanging and training of quality experts
- QM inviting one free delegate place annually to a nominated TKTA representative to attend its Annual Conference
If any additional costs will be incurred as a result of the collaboration, agreement to progress any allocation/reimbursement of costs should be agreed between Q.M and TKTA 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.

Retention of information

Information exchanged under this Memorandum of Understanding will be held in accordance with Q.M’s and TKTA’s retention schedules. For both Q.M and TKTA, this will be up to five years.

Intellectual property rights

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

The settlement

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

Duration of Mou

The Memorandum of Understanding will take effect from the date of its signature and shall continue for 3 years unless it is terminated by the giving of three months' notice by either Party. It may be extended on mutual written consent of both parties.

Alteration of MoU

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 MoU
Resources

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

Signatures of the Parties

Vicki Stott
Chief Executive, QAA
Date: 06.05.2022

Ulkar Sattarova
Chairperson of the Management Board, TKTA
Date: 06.05.2022

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