



# **REPORT**

**on the activities of the  
Non-Profit Organisation  
"Independent Agency for  
Accreditation and Rating"  
for 2023**



**Astana, 2023**

**TO THE SUPERVISORY BOARD**



**REPORT**  
**on the activities of the Non-Profit Organisation "Independent Agency for**  
**Accreditation and Rating"**  
**for 2023**

**Astana, 2023**

## CONTENT

<b>List of Designations and Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b><i>1 Continuous Activity in Developing the Quality Assurance System in the National and International Educational Space.....</i></b>	<b>8</b>
<i>1.1 Strengthening IAAR's Position in the National and International Accreditation Services Market through Quality Improvement, Geographic Expansion and Enhancement of Accreditation Procedures.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>1.2 Enhancing the Quality Potential of National and International Experts .....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>1.3 Effective management of IAAR activities through the development of human resources, their professional competencies and achieving the financial stability of the Agency .....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>1.4 Enhancing IAAR's effectiveness through the development of feedback and improvement of the internal quality assurance system .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<b><i>2. Monitoring the Quality Assurance in Education and Incorporating Best Global Practices into the Development of National Education Systems and Organisations</i></b>	<b>30</b>
<i>2.1 Enhancing the Quality of Post-Accreditation Monitoring Procedures and Rules</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>2.2 Enhancing IAAR's Analytical Capacity in Improving National Education Quality Assurance Systems.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<b><i>3. Conducting ranking studies in the field of higher and postgraduate education, aiming to enhance the competitiveness of educational institutions and their recognition in the international educational space .....</i></b>	<b>36</b>
<i>3.1. Ensuring the improvement of quality and expansion of the scope of ranking studies in the field of higher and postgraduate education.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<b><i>4. Timely informing society about the results of assessing the quality of educational institutions' activities and fostering feedback, based on the principles of transparency and reliability .....</i></b>	<b>44</b>
<i>4.1 Enhancing public awareness of the results of assessing the quality of educational programmes and the activities of educational and scientific institutions.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<b><i>5. IAAR – recognised international accreditation agency.....</i></b>	<b>47</b>
<i>5.1 Strengthening and expanding international recognition and authority of IAAR .</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>5.2 Enhancing the quality of international activities and consolidating IAAR's achievements .....</i>	<i>50</i>
<b><i>SWOT analysis of activities.....</i></b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>57</b>

## List of Designations and Abbreviations

**ABET** - Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology

**ACQUIN** - Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute

**APQN** - Asia-Pacific Quality Network

**ASIIN** - Accreditation Agency for Degree Programs in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics

**CEENQA** - Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

**CIQG** - Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) International Quality Group

**ENQA** - European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

**EQAR** - European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

**ESG** - Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

**ISQua** - International Society for Quality in Health Care

**IAAR** - Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating

**INQAAHE** - International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

**IREG** - International Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence

**PhD** - Doctor of Philosophy Programme

**MA** - Master's Programme

**MQA** - Malaysian Qualifications Agency

**QA** - Quality Assurance

**AC** - Accreditation Council

**BA** - Bachelor's Programme

**IQAS** - Internal Quality Assurance System

**HEI** - Higher Education Institution

**WFME** - World Federation for Medical Education

**EEP** - External Expert Panel

**EHEA** - European Higher Education Area

**IA** - Institutional Accreditation

**IA (Ex-Ante)** - Initial Institutional Accreditation

**KR** - Kyrgyz Republic

**MSHE RK** - Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan

**MES KR** - Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic

**RI** - Research Institute

**NCE** - National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
"Atameken"

**NSQAE** - National System for Quality Assessment in Education

**EO** - Educational Organisation

**EP** - Educational Programme

**BEP** - Basic Educational Programme

**EPHE** - Educational Programmes of Higher Education

**AS** - Academic Staff

**ISA** - Initial Specialised Accreditation

**RK** - Republic of Kazakhstan

**SA** - Specialised Accreditation

**SA (Ex-Ante)** - Initial Specialised Accreditation of Educational Programmes

**MM** - Mass Media

**TVE** - Technical and Vocational Education

**FSBI** - Federal State Budgetary Institution

**EC** - Expert Council

## INTRODUCTION

The Non-Profit Organisation "Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating" (hereinafter - IAAR) is a leading international accreditation agency for quality assurance in education. **IAAR is a full member** of European, Asian, and American educational quality networks and agencies: **INQAAHE** – International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education; **CHEA/CIQG** – Council for Higher Education Accreditation's International Quality Group in the USA; **IREG** – International Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence; **CEENQA** – Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education; **APQN** – Asia-Pacific Quality Network; **APQR** – Asia-Pacific Quality Register; **IQA** – Islamic World Quality Assurance Agencies Network.

**IAAR** is the first accreditation agency from the CIS countries to receive high recognition status from the World Federation for Medical Education (**WFME**). IAAR's activities comply with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (**ESG**) and the World Federation for Medical Education (**WFME**). IAAR is the first accreditation body in Kazakhstan to attain full membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (**ENQA**). By the decision of the Registration Committee on June 27/28, 2022, IAAR was re-included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (**EQAR**) for another five years. Attaining the status of a recognised agency confirms IAAR's adherence to high international standards.

Thanks to full membership in international and European networks, educational organisations and programmes accredited by **IAAR** receive **international accreditation status**.

IAAR's strategic development goals focus on strengthening its status as a recognised, competitive Agency for quality assurance in education at both national and international levels. IAAR's activities in 2023 were based on the goals and objectives defined by programmatic documents and legislation in the field of education in Central

Asian countries and the European Higher Education Area, international quality assurance documents, and the IAAR Development Strategy for 2022-2026.

Demonstrating high competitiveness, IAAR consistently conducts independent, objective, professional assessments of educational activities in the Eastern European and Central Asian region (in the Republic of Kazakhstan and 14 other countries including Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Moldova, Romania, Belarus, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Barbados, Dominica, etc.) based on concluded agreements and recognition by the relevant authorities of these countries. By applying best global quality assurance practices, IAAR promotes the efficiency and quality of educational and scientific activities of educational organisations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in accordance with the key national and international trends in education system development.

From **2011 to 2023**, **261** educational organisations and over **4900** educational programmes in **15** Central Asian and Eastern European countries have undergone international accreditation by IAAR.

Promoting a culture of quality and forming strategic priorities, IAAR always considers leading trends in the development and activities of key partners and various quality assurance networks. The adoption of important programme documents by IAAR's leading partners in 2021-2023, such as the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME), the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), and the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA), which reflect key areas of their development and expand opportunities for accreditation activities, cannot help but influence IAAR's activities as a full member of these organisations.

The "Development Strategy of Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating for 2022-2026" was developed and approved in December 2021. In November 2023, the Development Strategy was amended and supplemented to reflect changes in international and national legislation in higher education. In March 2023, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved the "Concept for the

Development of Higher Education and Science in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2029," which aims to provide a legislative foundation, autonomy for higher education institutions, attract talent to universities and research organisations, and improve knowledge and competencies through modern educational programmes based on emerging technologies and the economy of the future, considering contemporary challenges in the higher education system. The updated **"IAAR Development Strategy for 2022-2026"** defines the mission, vision, strategic goals, objectives, content of activities, key indicators, and expected outcomes for the long-term, medium-term, and short-term periods.

Through its accreditation activities, standards and procedures, IAAR guides educational organisations to meet the diverse interests and abilities of students, broadly develop modern educational and digital technologies, engage in academic exchanges with international partners, involve foreign experts in teaching activities, and increase accountability for the quality of services provided.

By applying best global quality assurance practices, IAAR contributes to improving the efficiency and quality of educational and scientific activities of educational organisations in Eastern Europe and Asia, in line with the key national and international trends in the development of higher education systems. The main trends in higher education include the interaction of universities and business with the state (the triple helix), digitalisation, internationalisation, academic excellence initiatives, the increasing role of consumers of educational products, the widespread use of digital formats and artificial intelligence, autonomous learning, micro-credential programmes, the integration of formal and informal education, lifelong learning, increasing quality requirements for educational services and university research, and the development of corporate governance and academic freedom of universities.



## ***1 Continuous Activity in Developing the Quality Assurance System in the National and International Educational Space***

The primary activity of IAAR is associated with conducting external evaluations aimed at enhancing the quality of education and competitiveness of educational services through independent accreditation, promoting a culture of quality at the national and international levels.

### ***1.1 Strengthening IAAR's Position in the National and International Accreditation Services Market through Quality Improvement, Geographic Expansion and Enhancement of Accreditation Procedures***

In 2023, IAAR's activities were based on the goals and objectives defined by international and national priorities in the development of the education systems of the Republic of Kazakhstan (including the Concept for the Development of Higher Education and Science in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2029) and foreign countries, international experience, and the implementation of key indicators of the IAAR Development Strategy for 2022-2026.

The goal of external evaluation is aligned with the mission, vision, values, and strategic objectives defined in the "IAAR Development Strategy for 2022-2026", developed with the participation of external stakeholders and approved by IAAR's collegial bodies.

The agency implements a Quality Assurance Policy aimed at continuous development and provision of quality services in the field of education quality assessment for consumers at all levels: the state, society, educational organisations, employers, students, and public organisations.

In 2023, IAAR conducted external evaluations in the following accreditation areas: institutional accreditation of secondary education organisations, higher and postgraduate education (HPE), medical education and additional education; initial accreditation of HPE organisations and medical education; specialised (programme) accreditation of technical and vocational education, HPE and medical education; initial specialised (initial programme) accreditation of HPE programmes and medical

education; accreditation of joint educational programmes. IAAR's internal documents regulating external quality assurance procedures are published on the IAAR website: <https://iaar.agency>.

*Development and Improvement of IAAR Standards and Documents.* In order to conduct high-quality external evaluations, IAAR independently develops standards and criteria for various types of accreditation. IAAR standards take into account the principles of the Bologna Process (objectivity, transparency, mobility, public information) and are used as a model for self-assessment by universities, harmonising the emerging national quality assurance system with the international requirements of the European Higher Education Area.

IAAR standards fully comply with the ESG and WFME standards and are developed with the involvement of stakeholders. Guided by ENQA recommendations, IAAR has systematised the procedures for reviewing and improving accreditation standards in accordance with the "Instruction for the Development and Improvement of IAAR Standards" (approved and implemented by IAAR Director's Order No. 19-15-01 dated September 2, 2015).

In 2023, efforts were made to improve the normative-methodological documentation of the agency, making changes and additions to the Institutional and Specialised Accreditation Standards for HEIs in line with the tasks and requirements of the state, society and the labor market.

In accordance with the Work Plan for 2023, working groups were formed by the IAAR Director General's order to improve several standards.

In 2023, the **standards for specialised accreditation of higher and/or postgraduate education programmes (Republic of Kazakhstan) were updated in accordance with the ESG (2015) and the National Accreditation Standard for Teacher Education.** These standards are applied during the specialised accreditation procedures of educational programmes in the field of pedagogy, which must undergo quality assurance procedures, including compliance with the Accreditation Standard for Teacher Education and the professional standard "Teacher". During the accreditation of teacher education programmes, the updated standards aim to

implement mechanisms for ensuring the quality of teacher education, conduct continuous monitoring of the quality of teacher education, and assess the quality of teacher training.

**The World Federation for Medical Education (WFME)** revised the wording of several of its standards, providing opportunities for each agency or institution to align its basic standards with the context in each area of education and training development, management and quality assurance (<https://wfme.org/standards/pgme/>). In accordance with these changes, in 2023 IAAR updated the WFME Standards for Postgraduate Medical Education.

Furthermore, in 2023, changes and additions were made to the standards for international institutional and specialised accreditation of technical and professional medical programmes, as well as post-secondary education, in accordance with the new edition of WFME standards (2020). These updates also align with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015), global standards for the education of professional nurses and midwives (2019), the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF, 2019), European Union standards for educational structures in Europe for nursing and midwifery (TUNING, 2018), the Directive of the European Union and Parliament on the recognition of professional qualifications (2013), and the framework of competencies (EFN, 2015). In 2023, international accreditation of educational organisations implementing technical and professional medical programmes, as well as post-secondary education, was conducted by the agency based on the updated standards.

According to IAAR's Plan for 2023 and the agreements with educational organisations, work was carried out to organise and conduct seminars to explain the standards and methodology of IAAR's international accreditation. In 2023, 15 seminars were held for educational organisations from Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Romania, Belize, Dominica and others.

Educational seminars for HEIs in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were conducted by the agency's strategic development advisor, Professor, Doctor of Political Sciences G.K. Iskakova. For universities in Romania and Belize, the seminars were

conducted by IAAR expert, Dr. Igor Chemortan, a Doctor of Biological Sciences, while in Dominica, Professor Nadia Badrawi, a candidate of medical sciences and associate professor, and Chair of the Republican Educational and Methodological Council for the medical direction, S.I. Sydykova, conducted the seminars.

Thus, taking into account international standards, national requirements, and the requirements of the European Higher Education Area, IAAR conducted significant work on the development/improvement of its own standards and criteria for various types of accreditation in accordance with international standards and ensured their wide dissemination among the academic community.

**International Accreditation.** In 2023, institutional and specialised (programme) accreditation of HEIs was carried out in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Romania, Armenia and Dominica. In total, in 2023, **19** HEIs from the Republic of Kazakhstan and **7** foreign HEIs underwent international institutional accreditation, and **306** study programmes of various levels of education in Kazakhstan and **75** study programmes of foreign HEIs underwent international specialised accreditation.

#### **International Accreditation in the Republic of Kazakhstan.**

The quality assessment of educational organisations in Kazakhstan was carried out based on the standards and guidelines of institutional and specialised accreditation for higher, vocational-technical, higher and postgraduate medical education, medical colleges, organisations of continuous professional education, schools implementing international programmes of primary, basic secondary and general secondary education with active stakeholder participation. More information about the accreditation procedure and methodology in Kazakhstan can be found on the IAAR website: [www.iaar.agency](http://www.iaar.agency) in the "Accreditation" section.

**Institutional Accreditation.** The quality assessment of educational organisations was carried out based on the standards and guidelines of institutional accreditation for higher, vocational-technical, higher and postgraduate medical education, medical colleges, and organisations of continuous professional education. In 2023, **19**

educational organisations underwent institutional accreditation at IAAR, including **9** HEIs, **3** technical and vocational education organisations, **6** organisations of continuous professional education, and **1** international school. The overwhelming majority of educational organisations fully demonstrated compliance with IAAR's institutional accreditation standards and were accredited for 5 years.

**Table 1. Quantitative indicators of accredited educational organisations in Kazakhstan for 2023 (institutional accreditation)**

Education Organisations	7 years	5 years	3 years	1 year	Refused	Total
<b>HEIs</b>						
National		2				2
State		1				1
Joint-stock		2				2
Private		4				4
Technical and Vocational Education Organisations						0
Technical and Vocational Education Organisations (medical)		3				3
Research Institutes, Organisations of Continuous Professional Education, Schools	1	6				7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19</b>

The data in Table 1 shows that out of the **19** educational organisations accredited by IAAR in 2023, **18** educational organisations are accredited for 5 years, and **1** is accredited for 7 years. The overwhelming majority of HEIs fully demonstrated compliance with IAAR's institutional accreditation standards.

IAAR accreditation in Kazakhstan is conducted with active involvement of stakeholders: employers, students, foreign experts, as well as a coordinator - a representative of the agency. Stakeholders are engaged both in the self-assessment process conducted by the educational organisations and during the visit of the external expert panel. The reports of external expert panels are publicly available on the IAAR website.

**Specialised (programme) accreditation in Kazakhstan.** The quality assessment of educational programmes was based on the standards and guidelines of specialised (programme) accreditation for higher, vocational-technical, basic medical and postgraduate medical education, as well as medical colleges. Within the framework of specialised (programme) accreditation in 2023, a total of **306** educational programmes were accredited, including **195** programmes - specialised accreditation and **111** programmes - initial specialised accreditation.

The overall statistics of accredited educational programmes in 2023 are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Quantitative indicators of accredited educational programmes for the year 2023 (specialised/programme accreditation)**

<b>Educational Institution/Programme</b>	<b>7 years</b>	<b>5 years</b>	<b>3 years</b>	<b>1 year</b>	<b>Accreditation Refused</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>HEIs</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>269</b>
BA	1	126	16			143
MA	1	89	7	1		98
PhD	2	23	3			28
<b>Medical HEIs</b>		<b>33</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>37</b>
BA		8				8
MA		10				10
PhD		2				2
Residency		13	2	2		17
<b>Vocational and Technical Education Institutions</b>						
<b>Total Accredited</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>306</b>

Out of **306** educational programmes, **4** programmes are accredited for 7 years, **271** programmes for 5 years, **28** programmes for 3 years, and **3** programmes for 1 year.

The distinctive feature of 2023 was the increase in the number of joint educational programmes in Kazakhstan presented for international accreditation by IAAR. Out of the **306** educational programmes accredited by IAAR in 2023, **13** were joint programmes. In 2023 an agreement was reached with the National Centre of Public Accreditation (NCPA, Russia) and MQA (Malaysia) to conduct joint accreditation. Work in this direction will continue in 2024.

**Cross-Border Accreditation.** An important direction of the Agency's activities was the conduct of international institutional and specialised (programme) accreditation of educational institutions of foreign countries based on the ESG and WFME standards, including online and hybrid visit formats.

During the international accreditation conducted by IAAR, compliance with the external evaluation procedures to the requirements of European quality assurance networks, ESG standards, as well as adherence to the rules and regulations established by the authorised bodies in the field of education of foreign countries, is ensured. The main instrument of external quality assessment is the "Standards and Guidelines for International Accreditation of Foreign Educational Institutions and Educational Programmes (based on ESG)", approved and implemented according to the order of IAAR No. 68/1-18-od of May 25, 2018.

In 2023, as part of the international institutional accreditation, IAAR conducted external quality assessment of **7** foreign institutions from Romania, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Dominica. **75** educational programmes of foreign HEIs passed the international programme accreditation by IAAR in 2023. In 2023, contracts were concluded for the external evaluation with Washington University of Health and Science (Belize), Columbus Central University School of Medicine (Belize). In 2022, a contract was concluded with the Swiss International Institute of Lausanne (Switzerland), and the international accreditation of this educational institution is planned to be conducted in 2024.

In 2023, IAAR conducted international accreditation at **5** HEIs in the **Russian Federation**. The IAAR External Expert Panels (EEP) have prepared conclusions on the levels of compliance of educational programmes with the criteria of standards, the justification of which is presented in the reports on the results of the accreditation procedures performed.

Of the **16** educational programmes of Russian universities accredited by IAAR in 2023, **12** programmes are accredited for 5 years, and **4** programmes for 3 years.

In 2023, IAAR conducted accreditation for 3 educational institutions in **Romania** («Victor Babes» University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timisoara, «Carol Davila» University of Medicine and Pharmacy Bucharest, George Emil Palade» University of

Medicine, Pharmacy, Science and Technology from Targu Mures). Out of the **5** educational programmes of Romanian HEIs accredited by IAAR in 2023, **3** programmes were accredited for 5 years, and **2** programmes for 3 years. Of the 2 educational institutions accredited by IAAR in 2023 as part of institutional accreditation, **1** institution was accredited for 5 years and **1** institution for 3 years.

In 2023, IAAR conducted institutional and programme accreditation of the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno (**the Republic of Belarus**), programme accreditation for Dnipro State Medical University (**Ukraine**), the American Canadian School of Medicine (Dominica), Azerbaijan University (**the Republic of Azerbaijan**) and Erebuni Medical Academy Foundation (**the Republic of Armenia**).

*IAAR's International Accreditation in Central Asia.* In 2023, IAAR conducted international accreditation in the **Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan**. For example, in 2023, IAAR conducted accreditation in **five** educational institutions in the **Kyrgyz Republic**, including institutional accreditation in **three** HEIs (Osh State University, Jalal-Abad State University named after Bekmamat Osmonov, International School of Medicine), and programme accreditation in **22** educational programmes across **four** HEIs (Kyrgyz State Technical University named after I. Razzakov, Osh State University, Jalal-Abad State University named after Bekmamat Osmonov and Kyrgyz National Agrarian University named after K.I. Skryabin). All educational programmes are accredited for 5 years.

In 2023, **11 EP** were accredited by the IAAR, including **10 EP** of the Tajik National University and **1 EP** of the Polytechnic Institute of the Tajik Technical University named after academician M.S. Osimi in the city of Khujand (**Republic of Tajikistan**).

All IAAR-accredited educational organisations and programmes are automatically included in the DEQAR database of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). The European DEQAR register is a registry of educational programmes and educational organisations accredited by recognised quality assurance agencies at the European level.

IAAR has placed reports of all accredited educational organisations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Belarus, Moldova, and others in the



DEQAR database. Inclusion in DEQAR of educational programmes and educational organisations confirms their compliance with the ESG quality assurance standards and serves as a basis for recognising accredited educational programmes in the European Higher Education Area. More details about educational organisations and programmes included by IAAR in DEQAR can be found at the link <https://www.eqar.eu/register/agencies/agency/?id=30&cn-reloaded=1>.

Thus, by conducting international institutional accreditation of educational organisations and programme accreditation of foreign university programmes, IAAR contributes to improving the effectiveness and quality of their educational and scientific activities, updating educational programmes, implementing the latest teaching technologies, promoting quality culture, and integrating into the international education space. Demonstrating high competitiveness in the international accreditation services market, IAAR successfully conducts external evaluation of HEIs in 15 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

### *1.2 Enhancing the Quality Potential of National and International Experts*

IAAR places special emphasis on enhancing the quality of the expert potential to achieve the ultimate goals of external quality assurance procedures for higher education, guided by its mission and strategic development objectives. To conduct high-quality assessments of educational organisations (EO) and/or educational programmes (EP), IAAR management pays particular attention to the selection and training of experts. The IAAR expert database includes representatives of the academic community, foreign experts, employers, and students.

In 2023, continuous monitoring was carried out to ensure the quality updating of the existing expert database with the aim of enhancing IAAR's expert potential. IAAR's expert potential in 2023 includes over **4000** representatives of the academic community from **39** countries worldwide. Specific selection criteria are established for each category of experts, allowing for the engagement of the most experienced specialists in quality assessment. Selection criteria and requirements are defined in the Regulations on the Regulation of the External Expert Activities of IAAR. Expert

selection takes into account years of experience in the field of education, academic degrees/titles, recommendations from accreditation agencies, professional organisations, educational institutions, and student associations.

IAAR actively collaborates with foreign accreditation agencies, facilitating mutual exchange of experts. Over the past 10 years, experts from ASIIN, ACQUIN, FIBAA, WFME, AIC, ANACEC, as well as representatives of foreign educational organisations from the UK, Germany, France, Greece, Turkey, Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and other countries, have participated in IAAR's expert panels. Experts recommended by IAAR's international partners are characterised by professionalism, a high level of competence, and cultural awareness.

As part of the cooperation agreement with international partners in 2023, the experts were involved from ANACEC (Moldova), from the National Accreditation Agency (Russia), from the State Examination Center of the Republic of Azerbaijan, from the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (Republic of Belarus), from the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), from the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA), from the Institute for Accreditation, Certification, and Quality Assurance (ACQUIN) in the accreditation procedures conducted by IAAR. Experts previously recommended by National Accreditation Agency (Russia), NCPA, FIBAA, ACQUIN, AIC, WFME, and foreign experts who have undergone training seminars were also engaged by the project managers of the Agency.

In 2023, the composition of foreign medical experts has noticeably expanded, foreign experts from Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the Russian Federation were attracted, as well as on the recommendations of foreign IAAR partner agencies.

In accordance with the IAAR's activity plan, serious attention was given to the participation of national experts in quality assurance procedures for foreign educational organisations based on IAAR recommendations. For example, in 2023, at the recommendation of the IAAR, Agency experts were involved in conducting external

evaluations in partnership with the National Center for Professional and Public Accreditation (NCPA, Russia).

Showing interest in enhancing the role and expanding the opportunities of students and employers in ensuring educational quality, IAAR actively involves students in programme evaluation and decision-making processes. ENQA's requirements for involving students in each assessed cluster were met in all accreditation procedures. For instance, student participation was ensured by engaging students as national experts.

IAAR's collaboration with accreditation agencies and experts demonstrates high professionalism and the demand for IAAR's experts, enabling the enhancement of the effectiveness of expert activities, the exchange of opinions, and the dissemination of best practices in accreditation.

Each year, IAAR conducts an analysis of the activities of experts of various categories to form a list of experts for involvement in accreditation processes as chairpersons of External Expert Panels (EEPs). Throughout 2023, interaction with IAAR experts was carried out as part of the formation of External Expert Panels, clarification of the methodology of institutional and programme accreditation for new experts according to the Standards and Guidelines introduced in 2020-2023.

In 2023, national and international experts actively shared their expertise not only during EEP visits but also at forums, seminars, and in the pages of the IAAR journal "Education. Quality Assurance". In 2023, articles by foreign authors from the Russian Federation - 4, the Kyrgyz Republic - 1, the Republic of Tajikistan - 1, the Republic of Uzbekistan - 1 were published. Joint articles by Kazakhstani and international authors were from the Russian Federation - 5, Malaysia - 1, and Slovakia - 1.

An important direction of IAAR's activity in enhancing the expert potential is the training and preparation of experts. The training and certification of experts are carried out in accordance with the "Regulations on the training, retraining, and qualification improvement of external experts". In line with annual plans aimed at building competencies of expert candidates in quality assessment, IAAR conducts training seminars. During these seminars, participants master the theoretical part: IAAR

requirements, the content of procedures for various types of accreditation, IAAR and ESG standards, and principles of ethical conduct. Preparation of expert candidates within such seminars is mandatory and serves as a basis for inclusion in the composition of EEPs. At the 2nd level of training, practical tasks are given according to the functions of experts in EEPs. Upon successful completion of 2nd level tasks, the candidate is included in the database of experts and assigned a category (1, 2, 3). These categories allow the agency to track the number of expert involvements and the quality of their work.

IAAR organised a series of seminars for the training and qualification improvement of experts, involving faculty and students from various HEIs in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Russian Federation, and Republic of Belarus, as well as representatives of independent accreditation agencies in Kyrgyzstan. In 2023, IAAR conducted training seminars according to the approved schedule for new and existing experts of the Agency, as well as chairpersons of EEPs.

In 2023, the "Professional Development Programme for IAAR Experts", which started in 2020, continued its implementation. For example, on 10th March 2023, a webinar was held for the chairs of External Evaluation Panels (EEPs) on the topic: "External Quality Assessment for Compliance with IAAR Standards and Focus on Improvement"; on March 29 and November 24, 2023 - webinars on preparing experts for the visit of an external expert panel to medical educational organisations; on November 24, 2023 - webinar on preparing IAAR experts for the EEP visit to educational organisations, etc. The moderators also highlighted issues of collegial discussion of preliminary assessment results in line with programme profile parameters, ensuring the consistency of assessment scores with the content of the analytical part of the report. The practical part of the webinar included working with case studies, assessing the compliance of educational organisation reports with IAAR accreditation standards and criteria, and conducting role games with focus groups.

IAAR paid significant attention to the training of experts for the external assessment of medical education organisations and medical educational programmes. On 29th March 2023, IAAR conducted a webinar to prepare experts for EEP visits to

medical education organisations. The webinar programme consisted of two parts. During the theoretical part, participants were introduced to the main tasks and functions of an expert in the accreditation process, conducting external quality assessments in accordance with IAAR international standards for medical education based on WFME standards. The practical part of the webinar involved working with case studies, evaluating the compliance of educational organisation reports with IAAR accreditation standards and criteria, and conducting business games with focus groups.

In accordance with the Regulations on Expert Councils, the Agency forms Expert Councils in various fields from the database of certified experts. The Agency also delegates individual experts to participate in Kazakhstan and international quality assessment events.

For the purpose of exchanging experiences, IAAR staff, national and international experts actively participate in forums, congresses, conferences, round tables, workshops, and training sessions in 2023 (VI Central Asian International Scientific and Practical Conference “Education of the Future: Wind of Change”; the International Conference of Medical Students "Winter Tom & Medical Global Forum" (MGF), organised by the Kazakhstan Medical Students' Association (KazMSA), at the premises of the Astana Medical University in Astana and others).

IAAR experts also actively participate in the development of methodological guidelines for accreditation and ranking procedures and publish articles. The professional activities of IAAR experts are regulated by a set of regulatory documents that define the ethical conduct and competencies of the expert. The "IAAR Expert Statement of Conflict of Interest" and the "Expert Code of Ethics" are published on the IAAR website under the "Experts" section.

Thus, in 2023, there is observed an expansion and qualitative growth of national and international experts due to the implementation of the Expert Professional Training Programme, close cooperation with other accreditation agencies, and the improvement of methodology for conducting procedures. The practice of involving foreign experts from recognised European and international quality assurance agencies in IAAR activities yields good results in external assessment.

### ***1.3 Effective management of IAAR activities through the development of human resources, their professional competencies and achieving the financial stability of the Agency***

The mission and strategic goals of IAAR have defined the organisational structure and the application of a project approach. The IAAR structure includes the following divisions: "Medical Projects," "International Projects," "Project for Institutional and Specialised Accreditation of HEIs," "Accreditation Project for Vocational and Technical Education Organisations," "Information-Analytical Project," and others, whose activities are regulated by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan and internal IAAR documents. There are the Supervisory Board, Accreditation Council, Appeals and Complaints Review Commission, Ranking Advisory Board, and Expert Councils by areas of activity. Overall management of the Agency is carried out by the Director-General.

IAAR promptly informs the general public about the results of assessing the quality of educational organisations' activities. Decisions adopted by the Accreditation Council are published on the Agency's website. In total, there were 9 Accreditation Council meetings in 2023. The organisation of the Accreditation Council's work was carried out according to the schedule of meetings. Information on decisions made by the Accreditation Council is sent to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (for the Registry 2, 3 of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan), to the website, and educational organisations.

IAAR employs 20 staff members on a permanent basis. The functional duties and responsibilities of IAAR staff are defined in job descriptions and work plans. Communication is carried out through daily interaction, weekly meetings, and internal audits. IAAR coordinators fill out a questionnaire after each EEP visit. All of this positively impacts the work and allows for the improvement of accreditation procedures.

The implementation of activities aimed at achieving Goal 1. "Continuous activities to develop the quality assurance system in the national and international educational space," of the Development Strategy of the Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating for 2022-2026 contributed to the development and formation of the following competencies in accordance with the requirements of the **"ENQA Framework of Professional Competencies"**, which define the general key competencies of quality assurance and enhancement specialists in ENQA member agencies.

In 2023, weekly meetings were regularly held to discuss internal quality assurance system issues. Additionally, internal seminars, formal and informal meetings of IAAR coordinators were conducted to exchange experiences and ensure consistency, coherence, and continuity of procedures for conducting external assessments of educational organisations and/or educational programmes. At such meetings, emerging difficulties during EEP visits to educational organisations, during the preparation of EEP reports, during anonymous surveys, including opportunities for improving and aligning all external assessment procedures into a single coordinated format, were regularly discussed. In 2023, the competencies of employees were further developed, such as the ability to anticipate potential issues and opportunities through a detailed understanding of the internal and external environment, as well as the national and international context. Thanks to the development of professional competencies among employees, the tasks set out in the IAAR Development Strategy are successfully completed, and the planned objectives are achieved.

In accordance with the Human Resources Development Plan for 2019-2023, IAAR employees enhance their professional competencies by participating in various conferences, seminars, and forums on education and quality assurance issues.

The process of professional development of employees is planned and monitored by IAAR management, discussed at internal meetings, and within the framework of the IQAS. In accordance with the Human Resources Development Plan for 2019-2023, IAAR employees develop personal and professional competencies necessary for the implementation of the Agency's strategic goals and objectives.

#### ***1.4 Enhancing IAAR's effectiveness through the development of feedback and improvement of the internal quality assurance system***

IAAR creates an internal environment to fully engage both employees and stakeholders in achieving strategic goals and determining the level of satisfaction of service consumers. In its Development Strategy for 2022-2026, IAAR has defined its mission, vision, and strategic objectives, which serve as the basis for preparing annual work plans.

In accordance with the Quality Policy and Development Strategy of IAAR, the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) has been developed, documented, implemented and maintained in operational condition. The Policy and Manual for the Internal Quality Assurance System are formalised in the IQAS Guidance and published on the website. The Policy and Manual for the Internal Quality Assurance System are updated with consideration of changes in the internal and external environment, focusing on shaping a quality culture and meeting the needs of stakeholders: the government, society, educational organisations, employers, students and public organisations.

Enhancing the effectiveness of IAAR's activities is facilitated by monitoring the agency's performance within the framework of the Internal Quality Assurance System, including organising working groups for continuous improvement, conducting internal audits, preparing reports on their results, developing and implementing corrective action plans, and other activities. Improving the IQAS is also achieved through feedback, analysis, corrective actions and risk management.

IAAR constantly works on improving the IQAS with the participation of collegial bodies and experts. Mechanisms of external and internal feedback aimed at improving performance have been developed and implemented. To engage staff in the process of continuous assurance of effectiveness of the IQAS, management supports the activities of working groups consisting of proactive employees and experts. IAAR staff and members of collegial management bodies participate in discussions on IAAR regulatory documents, including the Development Strategy, complaint and appeal



procedures, accreditation standards and criteria, and provide suggestions and recommendations for improving IAAR's activities.

In accordance with the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) Guidance, IAAR conducts internal audits of the quality assurance system to determine its effectiveness, assess efficiency, and ensure compliance with IAAR requirements, as well as the requirements of consumers and external regulatory documents. Internal audits are conducted once a year for key processes - accreditation and post-accreditation monitoring of educational organisations and/or programmes, and other areas.

In accordance with the order of the General Director, the internal audit took place from February 6 to 17, 2023. The results of the internal audit showed that the agency's staff conducted the main business processes - international accreditation of educational organisations and/or programmes and post-accreditation monitoring - in accordance with IAAR Standards and requirements; project managers and IAAR staff have done a great deal of work to improve the internal quality assurance system. According to the analysis of the reports of expert panels (EEPs) on the audited HEIs, all activities of the visit programme were completed in full and within the specified time frames, allowing for an external assessment in accordance with the standards. Coordinators ensured strict adherence to accreditation deadlines (submission of self-assessment report, EEP visit, development, approval, and implementation of the visit programme, etc.) in accordance with the established deadlines (EEP Guidance, Accreditation Standards).

The analysis of self-assessment reports showed that the majority of coordinators sought to ensure compliance of self-assessment reports with the requirements of Standards and Guidelines (Guidelines for preparing the self-assessment report of the educational organisation). The working group noted that strengthening substantive and technical monitoring by coordinators of reports remains relevant.

The working group concluded that accreditation is carried out in accordance with IAAR's internal documents. The EEP reports in terms of structure and content generally meet IAAR's requirements. The content of the evidential and analytical parts of the EEP reports mostly correlates with each other, and the recommendations are

generally justified and aimed at improving the activities of HEIs. The analysis of EEP reports showed that EEP experts take into account the remarks formulated as a result of internal expertise and present reports to the Accreditation Council at a higher quality level.

The working group notes that the content of EEP reports, including the evidential and analytical parts, strengths, and recommendations noted by experts, has qualitatively improved. This was facilitated by conducting training seminars for experts in 2022-2023 to explain the new, updated requirements for writing EEP reports. Coordinators, when conducting the review processes of self-assessment reports of educational organisations and internal expertise of EEP reports, as well as members of the working group during internal audits, were guided primarily by IAAR requirements outlined in the Guidance for organising and conducting the external evaluation procedure during accreditation of educational organisations and/or programmes.

During the internal audit, the working group identified the following typical shortcomings and observations:

- In some EEP reports, the results of anonymous surveys of students and staff are poorly reflected to support recommendations;
- In section (VI) Compliance with Accreditation Standards, after the name of each standard, criteria of the standard are not always specified;
- Recommendations are not always presented for each educational programme separately;
- In some reports, there is a discrepancy between the EEP assessment in the parameters of the table and the textual part of the report;
- Many EEP reports exhibit technical shortcomings in formatting, which were noted during the previous audit.

In the post-accreditation monitoring in 2022-2023, coordinators intensified control over the quality of action plans for improvement and enhancement of quality provided by educational organisations, including compliance with EEP recommendations, filling out the "Actions to implement recommendations" section

considering the specifics of the accredited object, specifying specific deadlines for implementation, and responsible persons.

To enhance the quality of IAAR's accreditation activities, IAAR within IQAS extensively utilises tools such as expert surveys. Based on feedback from experts, the following recommendations have been proposed:

1. Preferably conduct EEP visits in person. Experts note a stronger workload when conducting international accreditation procedures online.
2. Reformulate certain criteria in separate standards, replacing them with more relevant wordings.
3. Hold separate training seminars for student experts to better prepare for EEP visits.
4. Extend the duration of online EEP visits to 4 days to accommodate time zone differences and conduct a more thorough analysis and evaluation of educational organisation activities.

Thus, the internal audit conducted by the working group, based on the analysis of IAAR's main business processes and the results of IAAR expert surveys, allowed for the identification of improvement opportunities and proposed measures aimed at enhancing the quality of IAAR's accreditation activities.

In order to improve the processes and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system, achieve better alignment between internal audit results and feedback from stakeholders, and integrate them into the reporting and planning system, the working group has proposed aligning the timing of internal audits, feedback analysis, annual reporting, and staff planning activities.

The internal audit conducted by the working group has identified improvement opportunities and proposed measures aimed at enhancing the quality of IAAR's accreditation activities in the form of a Corrective Action Plan. This plan included **11** activities, all of which were fully implemented during 2023. Specifically, according to the corrective action plan, during training seminars and EEP visits, coordinators highlighted to the EEP Chair and members the need for active use and reflection of anonymous student and staff survey results in the EEP report to support conclusions

and recommendations. During training seminars for medical universities, particular emphasis was placed on explaining to internal university experts the significance of the assessment positions "strong," "satisfactory" and "requires improvement," as well as the necessity for critical self-analysis when developing self-assessment reports. Coordinators monitored the EEP Chair and members' formulation of targeted recommendations in EEP reports regarding the content of each programme separately. Enhanced control over the quality of educational organisations' submitted Action Plans for improvement and quality enhancement, including compliance with EEP report recommendations, was implemented, specifying deadlines and responsible persons.

Practice shows the positive impact of IAAR's internal audit on ensuring the quality of all agency projects. Within the existing quality assurance system, the results of the aforementioned surveys are used for appropriate analysis and improvement of IAAR's activities. Issues related to the internal quality assurance system are regularly discussed at weekly meetings of agency staff, Expert Councils, and the Accreditation Council.

The results of internal audits, stakeholder surveys, analytical reports, analysis of EEP reports, and others are taken into account in the operational activities of the Agency, in the development of IAAR's annual development plans, individual employee plans, and more. IAAR's practices demonstrate a positive impact on maintaining confidence in the unconditional compliance with established requirements for the main business processes: international (institutional and specialised/programme) accreditation, post-accreditation monitoring of educational institutions.

IAAR ensures the functioning of stakeholder-related processes and systematically conducts activities to study stakeholders' opinions regarding its products and services. The analysis of surveys of educational institutions and experts, using measurement tools, as well as EEP reports, is conducted annually as part of an information-analytical project. The results of the analysis of surveys of educational institutions and experts are published on the IAAR website in the "Analytical Reports" section, reviewed by Expert Councils to develop recommendations for improving IAAR's processes, and presented to IAAR management, and used in external quality assurance processes.

To identify current issues, trends, and prospects for the development of higher education and new approaches to quality assurance, IAAR annually conducts an analysis of EEP reports, the results of which are discussed at the Expert Council on Higher Education and also published on the IAAR website.

Work with stakeholders and service consumers, in accordance with the Quality Policy, is aimed at meeting their requirements and is based on principles of feedback and mutually beneficial partnerships. Throughout 2023, IAAR conducted educational, explanatory and informational work with educational organisations, youth organisations through various platforms (for example, the seminar "Approaches to the Development and Implementation of Joint Educational Programmes and Double Degree Programmes," organised by the National Centre for Higher Education Development; round table "Universities in the system of professional certification: access to the international level" (Astana); seminar on the implementation of new regulatory policies (NARXOZ University, Almaty); International Second Theorico - practical forum "SCOME Camp", organised by Kazakhstan Medical Students' Association (KazMSA), etc.).

IAAR engages in constructive collaboration with governmental, non-governmental, and public organisations (student unions, associations, professional communities of employers, etc.), as well as international partners. IAAR interacts with authorised educational bodies in the countries where it operates, in accordance with legislative requirements, informs about its activities and external evaluations, promotes the development of the national quality assurance system, provides consultation on the implementation of ESG standards, conducts joint events on quality assurance issues, and contributes to the professional development of the academic community. IAAR annually submits reports on its activities and regularly informs the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, the National Accreditation Council of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan about accredited educational organisations and/or programmes, according to their requirements.

The increased involvement of external stakeholders in quality assessment is evidenced by IAAR's collaboration with professional associations, employer communities and student organisations, as well as foreign HEIs within IAAR's collegiate bodies (AC, EC HE, EC MO, EC VET). To enhance IAAR's effectiveness, it continued to collaborate with the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Atameken," the National Medical Association of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Association of Higher Educational Institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the National Engineering Academy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the International Academy of Informatisation, and others.

IAAR's collaboration with youth and student organisations. The Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating actively fosters trust and partnership with youth organisations in Kazakhstan, which demonstrate the ability to promote the interests of students and a willingness to take responsibility for the quality of education alongside other stakeholders. In 2023, IAAR collaborated actively with youth and student organisations in Kazakhstan, including the largest student organisation - the Alliance of Students of Kazakhstan.

IAAR views periodic external quality assessment by recognition bodies and external evaluators as an effective tool for measuring, analysing, and improving its performance. In accordance with IAAR's Development Strategy, it undergoes periodic external quality assessments at both national and international levels. For example, inclusion in EQAR means that all IAAR-accredited educational institutions and programmes will automatically be included in the DEQAR database of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). As of 31st December 2023, **3098** reports from **130** educational organisations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Romania, Uzbekistan, Armenia, and Ukraine are registered in the DEQAR database. Information on IAAR's inclusion in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) is available at the following link: <https://www.eqar.eu/register/agencies/agency/?id=30>.

Inclusion in DEQAR of educational programmes and educational institutions confirms their compliance with ESG quality assurance standards and serves as a basis

for the recognition of accredited educational programmes within the European Higher Education Area.

Thus, IAAR, by conducting international accreditation of educational institutions and educational organisations in the Republic of Kazakhstan and foreign countries, demonstrates high competitiveness in the international accreditation services market and successfully conducts external assessments of HEIs in 15 Eastern European and Central Asian countries. In 2024, work will continue on the external evaluation of the Swiss International Institute of Lausanne (Switzerland), Washington University of Health and Science and Columbus Central University School of Medicine (Belize), which have submitted applications for the first time.

## ***2. Monitoring the Quality Assurance in Education and Incorporating Best Global Practices into the Development of National Education Systems and Organisations***

### ***2.1 Enhancing the Quality of Post-Accreditation Monitoring Procedures and Rules***

Post-accreditation monitoring is conducted to monitor the implementation of recommendations by the external expert panel of accredited educational organisations and/or educational programmes in accordance with the criteria of the respective type of accreditation. In order to improve the quality of post-accreditation monitoring, accredited educational organisations submit an interim report to IAAR, which contains information about their activities in implementing the recommendations of the expert panel since receiving the accreditation certificate and includes information about all changes in the educational organisation in accordance with accreditation standards. According to the work plan of the Accreditation Council, the report of the Chair of the Expert Council on Higher Education on the results of post-accreditation monitoring of educational organisations and/or educational programmes is heard.

In 2023, the procedure for post-accreditation monitoring was completed by **106** educational organisations, including **93** HEIs (*including 21 international ones*), **10** colleges, **2** organisations of additional education, and **1** international school.

Within the framework of institutional accreditation, **36** educational organisations underwent the procedure, including: **24** HEIs, **9** colleges, **2** organisations of additional education, and **1** international school.

As part of specialised (programme) accreditation in 2023, post-accreditation monitoring covered **1123** educational programmes, including **1087** HEIs programmes and **36** programmes of technical and vocational education.

All educational organisations successfully passed post-accreditation monitoring, except for the World Economy bachelor's and master's programmes and the Finance and Credit master's programme at the Tajik State University of Commerce, due to the organisation's failure to implement recommendations for post-accreditation monitoring. Post-accreditation monitoring was carried out for **3** HEIs, **55** educational programmes, as well as for the institutional accreditation of **1** additional education organisation, the decision on which will be made on January 26, 2024 at a meeting of the Accreditation Council.

Information on the decisions of the Accreditation Council regarding post-accreditation monitoring, as well as reports of expert groups on the results of post-accreditation monitoring of educational organisations and/or educational programmes, is posted on the agency's website.

**Table 3. Post-accreditation monitoring of educational organisations and/or educational programmes in 2023**

<b>Organisations</b>		<b>Institutional Accreditation</b>	<b>Programme Accreditation</b>
<b>HEIs</b>	Civilian	15	937
	Medical	9	150
<b>VET Organisations</b>	Civilian	2	7
	Medical	7	29
<b>Schools</b>		1	0



<b>Continuous Professional Learning Organisations</b>		2	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>36</b>	<b>1123</b>

In 2023, the number of educational programmes in higher education institutions that underwent post-accreditation monitoring increased by **417** compared to 2022, reaching **1087** programmes.

The number of HEIs that underwent post-accreditation monitoring following institutional accreditation increased (planned at **15**) to **24** institutions, while the number of technical and vocational education organisations (planned at **4**) reached **9** institutions.

As evidenced by the 2023 practice, the plan for post-accreditation monitoring was fully implemented, educational organisations underwent the post-accreditation monitoring procedure in a timely manner, and the quality of the materials provided improved.

## ***2.2 Enhancing IAAR's Analytical Capacity in Improving National Education Quality Assurance Systems***

As part of the implementation of the Development Strategy for 2022-2026, aimed at improving the quality of accreditation procedures and receiving feedback from key stakeholders, IAAR conducts analytical activities and presents developed documents and materials to the wider public.

In 2023, monitoring based on the analysis of reports from external expert panels was carried out, providing an assessment of the performance of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Republic of Kazakhstan during the international specialised accreditation conducted by IAAR in 2022. This allows identifying areas for improving the activities of HEIs and drawing the attention of Kazakhstan's HEIs to the recommendations presented. The implementation of these recommendations

influences the quality of educational activities not only of individual HEIs but also of the entire higher education system of the country.

Monitoring reports from specialised accreditation expert panels for 2022 covered **376** educational programmes. The recommendations presented in the reports of **26** Kazakhstani HEIs allowed for summarising the assessment of their activities against each standard and providing suggestions for further development. IAAR evaluated the quality of educational programmes based on the basis of the Standards and Guidelines for specialised accreditation of higher education institutions of educational programmes that meet ESG standards.

According to the analysis conducted, out of **380** educational programmes, **2** programmes were accredited for **7 years**, **299** for **5 years**, **66** programmes for **3 years**, and **5** programmes were accredited for **1 year**. **One** educational programme was not accredited. Out of the total number of accredited educational programmes, **31** were re-accredited: **30** programmes for **5 years** and **1** programme for **1 year**. IAAR also conducted initial (ex-ante) accreditation for **147** educational programmes, including **112** programmes accredited for **5 years**, **31** programmes for **3 years**, and **4** programmes for **1 year**.

To improve feedback mechanisms, "Analytical Report on the Results of the IAAR Experts Survey for 2022" and "Analytical Report: Survey of IAAR Accredited Educational Organisations for 2022" were prepared. These analytical reports were based on the results of a survey of **268** IAAR experts who participated in international accreditation procedures in educational organisations and the questionnaire responses from **47** educational organisations that underwent IAAR's international institutional and/or specialised (programme) accreditation in 2022.

According to the analysis conducted, the IAAR's external evaluation procedure is organised at a high level and meets modern requirements. Many experts are attracted by the opportunity to work in a leading international accreditation agency and exchange experiences with colleagues from other HEIs. Experts are interested in training and acquiring new skills and professional competencies.

According to the survey results, experts have adapted to conducting visits by expert panel in a hybrid format and note that this format of conducting international accreditation procedures is the most convenient. **97%** of experts positively and highly evaluate the work of IAAR coordinators. As demonstrated by the conducted monitoring, **98%** of experts note the smooth collegial work of the members of expert panels, a comfortable atmosphere, and constant support from IAAR Chairpersons and coordinators.

Following the assessment and analysis of the expert survey for 2022, the following recommendations were made:

1. Reformulate some criteria in the standards for assessing joint educational programmes.
2. Organise and conduct international accreditation procedures in a hybrid format whenever possible.
3. Continue the practice of holding separate training seminars for experts in the medical field.

In 2023, analytics on the quality assurance activities in HEIs of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2021-2022 were prepared. During this period, IAAR conducted international accreditation for **6** HEIs and **21** educational programmes. Additionally, analytics on the Independent University Ranking of the Kyrgyz Republic - 2022 were presented, showing changes in the activities of HEIs participating in the ranking. IAAR ranked **261** educational programmes, which is **12%** more compared to the previous period.

As part of ENQA recommendations, an "Analysis and Evaluation of Student-Centred Learning in Higher Education Institutions" was prepared. The analytical report describes the features of student-centred approach, its goal and principles, examines the advantages and expected outcomes. Based on the analysis of surveys of teachers, students, and IAAR experts, recommendations for further improvement and development of student-centred learning are provided, along with an assessment of the impact of external evaluation on the development of student-centred learning in Kazakhstan's HEIs.

In 2023, an "Analysis of the Development of Academic Freedom, Management, and Financial Autonomy of HEIs in the Republic of Kazakhstan" was also presented. The analysis of the activities of higher education institutions and the implementation of educational programmes in the country presented the stages of formation and development of academic freedom and provided classification. Mechanisms for implementing academic and managerial autonomy of the country's HEIs were studied, systematised and disclosed, along with an assessment of the state of the higher education system and the influence of academic freedom on improving the quality of educational services.

All analytical reports are available on the IAAR website to ensure open access for stakeholders and the wider public to information on analysis results, contributing to the development of internal quality assurance systems in educational organisations. The results of analysis of all types of surveys are submitted for consideration to the Expert Councils and presented as recommendations to the Director-General for decision-making.

*The annual report on IAAR's activities* contains information on all areas of IAAR's activities and is presented to the Supervisory Board. In accordance with the Implementation Plan of the IAAR Development Strategy for 2023, a report on IAAR's activities for the authorised body in the field of education and science has been prepared. As part of the quality assurance of education, an annual report on IAAR's activities in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan is developed and published. By June 15 and December 30, the preparation and submission to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic of the list of accredited educational institutions and educational programmes in accordance with the reporting form "Register of Accredited Institutions and Programmes" is carried out. IAAR's report on activities to promote a culture of quality in HEIs in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2023 was prepared and submitted in November 2023 to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic and the National Accreditation Council. It is mandatory for the Agency to subsequently publish the IAAR Activity Report in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic.

In 2023, the monitoring of IAAR's accreditation activities and the assessment of the activities of HEIs in the process of conducting international specialised accreditation allow identifying prospective directions of HEIs' activities, implemented educational programmes, and the implementation of proposed recommendations will have a positive impact on both the quality of activities of individual HEIs and the higher education system as a whole. The results of summarising best practices and identifying trends in the field of education quality assurance through IAAR's analytical activities are used by interested stakeholders at the national and international levels.

Informational and analytical materials are systematically published on the IAAR website, including thematic analysis, and the development of an internal quality assurance system in educational organisations. In accordance with the Implementation Plan of the IAAR Development Strategy, systematic work is carried out to ensure the publication of reports of External Expert Panels on the results of the evaluation of educational organisations and (or) educational programmes on the IAAR website. All the aforementioned analytical materials and reports are available on the IAAR website (<http://iaar.kz/en/about/iaar-reports/analytical-reports>) to ensure open access to information for the wider public.

Thus, conducting a systematic analysis of the agency's business processes, supporting continuous feedback with key stakeholders, improving its mechanisms, and providing open and reliable information about its activities allows the collective to ensure the high quality of its work as an international accreditation agency.

### ***3. Conducting ranking studies in the field of higher and postgraduate education, aiming to enhance the competitiveness of educational institutions and their recognition in the international educational space***

#### ***3.1. Ensuring the improvement of quality and expansion of the scope of ranking studies in the field of higher and postgraduate education***

One of the main activities of IAAR is the organisation and conduct of ranking studies. The annual ranking studies conducted by IAAR are oriented towards

international standards and aimed at developing the system of higher and postgraduate education. IAAR has been conducting ranking studies in the Republic of Kazakhstan since 2014, in the Kyrgyz Republic since 2018, and the international IAAR EUR ranking since 2020. The IAAR ranking system received confirmation of compliance with the Berlin Principles in 2020 and recognition as "IREG Approved" (<https://ireg-observatory.org/en/initiatives/ranking-seal-of-approval/>). According to the IAAR Charter, ranking studies are conducted independently of the accreditation process and do not affect its results, and are implemented in accordance with the Methodology for ranking HEIs and EPs (<https://iaar.agency/rating/1/0/2020>).

To determine the level of education quality, the Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating conducts ranking studies of higher education institutions: "Independent ranking of demand for HEIs in the Republic of Kazakhstan", "Independent Ranking of HEIs of the Kyrgyz Republic" and the International Ranking "IAAR Eurasian University Ranking (IAAR EUR)."

In 2023, certain difficulties were observed in conducting rankings, particularly the decrease in the number of ranking participants, which is associated with the introduction of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education Ranking in the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as the overall number of HEIs in the Russian Federation and Ukraine in the International ranking due to the continuation of the military-political conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the greater orientation of HEIs towards other international (global) rankings.

The Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR) has been conducting the **"Independent Ranking of Demand for HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan"** for 10 years. Since 2014, the IAAR ranking has been one of the objective and time-tested university rankings in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

IAAR has developed its own methodology for evaluating higher education institutions, which has undergone an audit and been approved by IREG (Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence), and has implemented a digital ranking platform. IAAR conducts institutional ranking of HEIs and presents the ranking by

groups and directions of educational programmes to all interested stakeholders. A distinguishing feature of the IAAR ranking methodology is the independent submission of information by HEIs about their achievements. The position in the ranking depends on the correctness of data entry and the completeness of the information provided by HEIs.

The evaluation of educational programmes of higher education institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan is conducted based on 5 main criteria:

- Quality of teaching staff and teachers who have received prestigious academic awards (15%);
- Research potential, including research work, publications in international journals, influence on the academic environment, and citation of scientific papers (25%);
- Internationalisation and academic mobility of students and academic staff (25%);
- Level of attracting talented students, master's and doctoral students (25%);
- Indicators of employment and demand for graduates in the labour market (10%).

In the "**Independent Ranking of Demand for HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan - 2023**," universities of multidisciplinary, technical, humanities-economic, medical and pedagogical directions, as well as art universities, participated, with over **1600** educational programmes ranked.

Based on the analysis of the results of the 2023 Ranking, Kazakhstani HEIs should pay particular attention to further developing their scientific potential. The publication activity of university faculty has increased by only **7%** compared to the previous year of 2022. High rates of indexation of scientific works by Kazakhstani scientists were demonstrated by Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, and Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University.

Monitoring the results of the IAAR Ranking showed a positive growth trend compared to the previous year, with a **22%** increase in the number of joint educational

programmes. The indicator of "Academic Mobility" increased by **15%**. Active participation in academic mobility programmes is noted in such HEIs as Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University.

According to the results of the Independent Ranking of Demand for HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the ranking table is headed by Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (**375,132** points). The leaders in terms of the number of points earned are also:

- ✓ L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (256,734 points),
- ✓ S. Seifullin Kazakh Agrotechnical University (135,122 points),
- ✓ E. Buketov Karaganda University (95,168 points),
- ✓ Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University (92,214 points),
- ✓ Almaty Technological University (69,928 points).

The Independent Ranking of Demand for HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan - 2023 provides graduates, the academic community, parents, and other interested parties with:

1. General Ranking "TOP-20" HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan - 2023.
2. Institutional Ranking of HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan by fields of undergraduate educational programmes - 2023.
3. Institutional Ranking of HEIs by fields of graduate educational programmes - 2023.
4. Institutional Ranking of HEIs by fields of doctoral educational programmes - 2023.
5. Ranking of HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan by groups of undergraduate educational programmes.
6. Ranking of HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan by groups of graduate educational programmes.
7. Ranking of HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan by groups of doctoral educational programmes.
8. General Ranking of the Faculty of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Top-50."



The Independent Ranking of Demand for HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan contributes to the growth of competitiveness in educational services and ensures public awareness of the quality of education and the level of educational programmes, the effectiveness of the university's research activities, and the professionalism of teachers.

Currently, for HEIs in the Kyrgyz Republic, an important strategic task is the shift in paradigm, which involves the implementation of new teaching and learning standards requiring the development of knowledge, IT technologies, and transnational education.

The Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating has been conducting the "Independent Ranking of HEIs of the Kyrgyz Republic" since 2018.

The Ranking of HEIs of the Kyrgyz Republic - 2023 reflects modern international trends in education development and serves as an important tool for transparent and objective assessment of HEI activities, while the comprehensive approach to multidimensional ranking takes into account the interests of students, the academic community, businesses, and employers. The IAAR ranking positively influences the improvement of the education system and provides an opportunity to see the necessary development trends.

In the Independent Ranking of HEIs of the Kyrgyz Republic - 2023, ranking was conducted for **224** educational programmes in all areas of specialist training. The top five leaders in terms of the number of ranked educational programmes include Osh State University, Kyrgyz State Technical University named after I. Razzakov, Kyrgyz National Agrarian University named after K. Skryabin, and Bishkek State University named after K. Karasaev.

Analysis of the results of ranking educational programmes shows a growth dynamic in the internationalisation of education and academic mobility. Compared to 2022, this indicator has increased by **5%**. The internationalisation of education in HEIs of the Kyrgyz Republic, according to the assessment of the "Academic Mobility" indicator, has seen significant development in the Kyrgyz State Medical Academy named after I.K. Akhunbayev and Osh State University.

The publication activity of the faculty of HEIs in Kyrgyzstan, according to the results of the Ranking demonstrates a growth trend. Increased competitiveness of scientific publications in indexed scientific journals is observed in: the Kyrgyz State Medical Academy named after I. Akhunbayev, Osh State University, the International University "Ala-Too" and the Kyrgyz State Technical University named after I. Razzakov. The increase in citation rates indicates the demand for the results of scientific work and the effectiveness of research activities of higher education institutions.

An important indicator of the performance of higher education institutions is the employment of graduates and their demand in the labour market. According to the results of the Independent Ranking of HEIs of the Kyrgyz Republic, a high percentage of employment is observed at the Kyrgyz State Technical University named after I. Razzakov, the Bishkek State University named after academician K. Karasaev, and the Osh Technological University named after M. Adyshev.

The leading universities in the Independent Ranking of HEIs of the Kyrgyz Republic - 2023, in terms of the number of points scored, are Osh State University, the Kyrgyz State Medical Academy named after I. Akhunbayev, the Kyrgyz State Technical University named after I. Razzakov, Osh Technological University named after Adyshev, the Kyrgyz National Agrarian University named after K. Skryabin, and Jalal-Abad State University named after B. Osmonov.

The results of the "Independent Ranking of HEIs of the Kyrgyz Republic - 2023" serve as the basis for ensuring the quality and increasing the competitiveness of HEIs, strengthening the positions of HEIs in the education market, attracting talented applicants, and expanding the export of educational services.

Since 2020, HEIs from countries such as the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Republic of Tajikistan have been participating in the international ranking "IAAR Eurasian University Ranking (IAAR-EUR)".

According to the results of the International Ranking "IAAR Eurasian University Ranking (IAAR-EUR)" 2023, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University continues to confidently hold the first place. The leaders in terms of the number of points scored also include the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation, Osh State University, Tajik National University and L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University.

The following nominations have been assigned in the International IAAR EUR Ranking:

<b>«IAAR EUR Worldwide recognition» Award</b>	<b><u>Russian Biotechnological University (ROSBIOTECH)</u></b>
<b>«IAAR EUR Quality Star» Award</b>	<b><u>Tajik National University</u></b> <b><u>L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University</u></b>
<b>«IAAR EUR Medical University» Award</b>	<b><u>Tajik State Medical University named after Abu Ali Ibn Sino</u></b> <b><u>Gomel state medical university</u></b>
<b>«IAAR EUR Technical University» Award</b>	<b><u>Almaty Technological University</u></b> <b><u>Ural State University of Railway Transport</u></b> <b><u>Karaganda Industrial University</u></b>
<b>«IAAR EUR Multidisciplinary» University Award</b>	<b><u>Kemerovo State University</u></b>
<b>«IAAR EUR Agricultural University» Award</b>	<b><u>S.Seifullin Kazakh Agro Technical Research University</u></b>
<b>« IAAR EUR Art and Culture University» Award</b>	<b><u>Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory</u></b> <b><u>T.K. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts</u></b>
<b>«IAAR EUR Humanities Science» Award</b>	<b><u>Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University</u></b> <b><u>Jalal-Abad State University Named After Bekmamat Osmonov</u></b>

The monitoring of IAAR rankings has shown a significant positive growth trend in all ranked educational institutions compared to the previous year. For example, the

indicator "Commercialisation of Scientific Projects" has increased by **17%**. The highest levels of grant funding are observed in institutions such as Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University and Osh State University.

The highest scientific potential is noted in HEIs in Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and the Kyrgyz Republic. Overall, this indicator has demonstrated a growth trend of more than **9%**.

A deep understanding of the national higher education system, as well as an understanding of the sector's issues at both national and international levels, has allowed for an objective ranking.

The results of IAAR rankings have been published in the republican newspaper "Kazakhstanskaya Pravda," the public and educational newspaper of the Kyrgyz Republic "Kutbilim," on the websites [www.iaar.agency](http://www.iaar.agency) and those of the HEIs. Additionally, the ranking results have been featured in the "Education Quality Assurance" Journal.

Thus, IAAR conducts various university rankings aimed at assessing the quality of implemented educational programmes at different levels and in various fields of personnel training, as well as their development in accordance with national and international trends in higher and postgraduate education. This is done to inform the general public and interested parties about the quality of educational services provided by HEIs in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the participating states of the "IAAR Eurasian University Ranking (IAAR-EUR)." However, it should be noted that in 2023, IAAR did not achieve the targets set forth in the Agency's Development Strategy for the following points: "The number of educational organisations participating in the IAAR independent ranking by directions and levels of personnel training in the Republic of Kazakhstan," "The number of educational programmes of HEIs submitted for participation in the IAAR Ranking," "The number of educational organisations participating in the IAAR EUR international ranking," etc. This can be attributed to the escalation of the military-political situation in Russia and Ukraine, the introduction of MSHE RK ranking practices, etc.

#### ***4. Timely informing society about the results of assessing the quality of educational institutions' activities and fostering feedback, based on the principles of transparency and reliability***

##### ***4.1 Enhancing public awareness of the results of assessing the quality of educational programmes and the activities of educational and scientific institutions***

Public awareness of the results of external evaluation of educational organisations and programmes is carried out through various channels:

- ✓ Publication of reports of the External Evaluation Panel (EEP) and decisions of the Accreditation Council (AC) on the IAAR website.
- ✓ Organisation of seminars, training seminars, online conferences, round tables, and the annual Central Asian Forum on Quality Assurance to disseminate information.
- ✓ Participation in dialogue platforms and conferences organised by international networks and foreign partners.
- ✓ Publication of materials on the effectiveness of external evaluation by IAAR in the scientific-information journal "Education. Quality Assurance".
- ✓ Presentations, interviews and publications in mass media and scientific journals.
- ✓ Posting of information and news updates on the IAAR website.

IAAR aims to inform the public by providing information on all major activities of the agency, changes in regulatory documents, internal quality assurance systems, and more. The agency continuously updates the registry of accredited educational organisations and programmes, publishes information about conducted events, and updates information on the accreditation procedure in the field of technical and vocational education. The results of IAAR's activities are also reflected in annual analytical reports covering all accreditation processes and procedures. There is ongoing communication to inform all stakeholders about the implementation of updated standards and guidelines for institutional and programme accreditation through the agency's website, informational emails, and other communication channels.

Information about IAAR's activities in international accreditation and rankings is disseminated through social media, national and international media, official resources of government bodies, Kazakhstani and foreign universities, and international organisations, demonstrating trust in the agency's activities and its high reputation both domestically and abroad.

In 2023, IAAR ensured the publication of information on international events involving IAAR representatives, details about IAAR's foreign partners (with whom memorandums of cooperation were signed), and IAAR's participation in international projects, including those under the Erasmus+ programme.

Regular updates on the IAAR website included information on the results of international accreditation of domestic and foreign educational organisations, including EEP reports, the list of EEP members, and other documents for the IAAR registry. All reports and materials were uploaded to the DEQAR database based on the accreditation results of educational organisations in 2023.

Continuous monitoring of announcements from international networks and partners was conducted in 2023, with prepared materials being published in newsletters such as INQAAHE Bulletin, Newsletter CEENQA and APQN Newsletter.

Throughout 2023, efforts were made to maintain and improve the IAAR website ([www.iaar.agency](http://www.iaar.agency)) and integrate it with the European DEQAR database and the Asia-Pacific DAQAR database.

**The scientific-information journal "Education. Quality Assurance"**. In order to highlight the best domestic and global practices in the field of education quality assurance, IAAR publishes the scientific-information journal "Education. Quality Assurance". The journal serves as an effective platform for discussing modern approaches and global trends in enhancing education quality, conducting interviews with international representatives of agencies and networks, and publishing relevant articles on the main trends in the development of national education systems and the best practices of foreign countries.

The journal is published four times a year in three languages (Kazakh, English and Russian). The journal is distributed not only in Kazakhstan but also abroad. There

is a separate website for the journal "Education. Quality Assurance": <http://iaar-education.kz>, where journals are freely available in electronic format, allowing IAAR to expand its information field.

In 2023, 4 issues of the journal "Education. Quality Assurance" were released. One of the tasks of the journal is to be included in the list of publications recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in three main areas: legal, pedagogical, and economic sciences. In connection with this, starting from the 4th issue of 2022, the structure of the journal consists of corresponding sections. During the year, **41** articles were published, including **13** in legal sciences, **13** in economic sciences, and **15** in pedagogical sciences. Of the total number of articles in the journal, **27** were published by Kazakhstani authors, **7** by foreign authors, and **7** jointly. Articles by foreign authors: from the Russian Federation - **4**, from the Kyrgyz Republic - **1**, from the Republic of Tajikistan - **1**, from the Republic of Uzbekistan - **1**. Joint articles by Kazakhstani and foreign authors: with the Russian Federation - **5**, with Malaysia - **1**, and with Slovakia - **1**.

In 2023, in accordance with the contract with the Scientific Electronic Library (SEL), all issues of the journal "Education. Quality Assurance" for the reporting year were placed on the website [www.elibrary.ru](http://www.elibrary.ru) in the specialised information system "Russian Science Citation Index" (RSCI).

Throughout 2023, work was carried out to prepare a package of documents for the inclusion of the journal in the list of publications recommended for the publication of the results of scientific activities by the Committee for Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In 2023, efforts were made to broadly attract public attention to the results and significance of the agency's activities in ensuring education quality through organising webinars, seminars, workshops, conferences, and forums, the information about which is published on IAAR's website in the news feed.

An important part of the Agency's activities is the annual Quality Assurance Forum. On October 6-7, 2023, the "**VII Central Asian International Forum on Quality Assurance in Education: Sustainable Future of Education - Quality and Competitiveness: Realities and Priorities**" (Astana) took place. More than 300 people, including representatives of government agencies, international networks for ensuring the quality of higher education, heads of higher education institutions from Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Moldova, and others, took part in the International Forum.

Within the framework of the International Forum, the Panel Sessions "Global Challenges and Trends in the Development of Education Systems", "Development of Scientific and Educational Models and Technologies in the Conditions of Digital Transformation", and "Ensuring the Quality of Medical Education" discussed key issues:

- development of the quality assurance system for higher education and independent accreditation in the context of global change;
- expansion of cooperation with international networks, agencies, universities contributing to the promotion of a culture of quality and the formation of a professional community;
- improvement of the quality of education, educational programmes, and student training trajectories according to global standards and constructive interaction between the academic community and the international labor market.

The International Forum allowed for the exchange of best practices in creating an effective education system in the context of digital transformation, discussing current challenges, and outlining ways to improve the quality of education in HEIs in Central Asian and European countries.

### ***5. IAAR – recognised international accreditation agency***

One of the key tasks in implementing IAAR's mission and vision, outlined in the Development Strategy for 2022-2026, is the recognition of IAAR at the national, European and international levels as a reliable partner in quality assurance. This



strategic task is being pursued through IAAR's active engagement on the international stage, commitment to European quality standards, and the study and implementation of best international practices.

### ***5.1 Strengthening and expanding international recognition and authority of IAAR***

One of IAAR's priority areas of activity in 2023 was the expansion of international cooperation and the agency's representation in international networks, maintaining its status as a reliable international body for quality assurance.

The agency carried out targeted work to develop mutually beneficial cooperation with recognised global quality assurance agencies in higher education in accordance with signed agreements (memoranda) on bilateral cooperation with **26** partner organisations. Throughout 2023, within the framework of these agreements, information exchange was conducted as needed, exchange of relevant materials on quality assurance, participation in network events, monitoring of timely payment of membership fees, and monitoring of all postal correspondence related to interaction with networks.

Special attention was paid to ensuring the participation of IAAR staff in international events organised by quality assurance networks such as APQN, INQAHEE, WFME, IREG, ENQA, CEENQA.

General Director Zhumagulova Alina and Deputy Director for International Cooperation Kanapiyanov Timur participated in the ENQA Members Forum on the topic "Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area: Linking Policy and Practice", which took place from 19th to 21st April 2023 in Tbilisi. The Forum was co-organised by the National Centre for Quality Enhancement of Education in Georgia (NCEQE). The Forum discussed such pertinent issues as "Quality Assurance: Is it Fit for the Future? Insights from agencies according to the interim results of the QA-FIT project", "Quality Assurance and Research", "Digital Transformation and Enhancement of Quality Assessment Procedures", "Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area: Stakeholders' Perspectives", "Looking into the Future:

Emerging Issues in Higher Education". The event was attended by 105 delegates from over 80 quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area.

On 8th December 2023, Yanovskaya O.A. and Kanapyanov T.E. participated in the International Conference "Central Asia – European Union: Prospective Directions of Cooperation in the Field of Quality Enhancement of Specialists Training", held in Almaty. During the conference, a meeting was held with the President of the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAE) José Quadrado and the Secretary General of ENGINEERS EUROPE Dirk Bochar.

In 2023, the Deputy General Director for International Cooperation Kanapyanov T.E. continued to represent the interests of IAAR in the APQN Board of Directors. Kanapyanov T.E., as the Director of the APQN Board, actively participated in developing the APQN Strategic Plan for 2022-2025, served as a member of the international expert group for the re-inclusion of the "National Centre for Public-Professional Accreditation (NCPA)" in the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR). In early 2023, he was elected Chair of the Organising Committee for the Annual APQN Academic Conference (AAC) and General Assembly (AGM) 2023. During the AAC & AGM 2023 held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Kanapyanov T.E. chaired the first APQN Board of Directors Meeting in 2023. During the APQN 2023 conference, he moderated various sessions including the Opening Ceremony and plenary sessions, actively participating in diverse discussions and activities. Kanapyanov T.E. was elected Chair of the Organising Committee for AAC & AGM 2024, which will take place in St. Petersburg.

For the purpose of informing the global community about accreditation agencies recognised at the European level, as well as HEIs that have successfully undergone international accreditation, the DEQAR project was created and developed. The European DEQAR register is a registry of educational programmes and educational organisations accredited by quality assurance agencies recognised at the European level. Inclusion in DEQAR of educational programmes and educational organisations confirms their compliance with the ESG quality assurance standards and serves as the basis for recognising accredited educational programmes within the European Higher

Education Area. More information about the DEQAR CONNECT Conference can be found at <https://www.eqar.eu/about/projects/deqar-connect/conference/agenda/>. IAAR has been a participant in the DEQAR CONNECT project since 2020. All IAAR-accredited educational organisations and programmes are included in the DEQAR database of the European Quality Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

As the first organisation from the CIS countries to be recognised by WFME, IAAR actively implemented in 2023 the right to conduct international accreditation of medical organisations and educational programmes in accordance with international standards. In accordance with WFME requirements, IAAR prepared and submitted the IAAR Annual Report for 2022 and information to the WFME President on the results of accreditation in 2022 of medical education organisations.

IAAR systematically supports the implementation of quality assurance measures in higher education by Authorised Bodies in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Romania, Moldova, Uzbekistan, and others. It provides consultations on establishing national quality assurance systems in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Process and ESG.

IAAR is an active participant in various levels of quality assurance events in education organised by Ministries of Education, public associations, and universities in Eastern European and Central Asian countries.

Thus, in 2023, IAAR's international activities were conducted at the European and international levels as a reliable partner in quality assurance. This includes expanding cooperation and partnerships with international networks and foreign agencies, active participation in international events on quality assurance in education, exchange of experiences and best practices, among others, contributing to the strengthening and expansion of IAAR's international recognition and authority.

### ***5.2 Enhancing the quality of international activities and consolidating IAAR's achievements***

In 2023, the Agency focused on improving the quality of its international activities. To solidify its international positions and develop international cooperation,

Agency staff participated in various events organised by international networks and partners.

On February 2, 2023, a delegation from IAAR comprising the Director-General, Alina Zhumagulova, and Advisor, Olga Yanovskaya, attended a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Minsk, Belarus. This meeting took place within the framework of the first International Scientific and Methodological Conference on "Quality Assurance in Education: Status, Issues, and Perspectives". The conference addressed issues related to enhancing the quality of education at all levels, discussing trends in education system development, quality management methods and tools, and developing unified approaches to ensure education quality.

In 2022, IAAR submitted an application to host the General Assembly of CEENQA in 2023, which was approved by the CEENQA Board. In the first half of 2023, under the leadership of Director-General Dr. Zhumagulova, IAAR conducted extensive preparations for and organisation of the CEENQA 2023 General Assembly at its premises. On June 2-3, 2023, the CEENQA-2023 General Assembly (Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) took place in Astana. Alina Zhumagulova, the Director-General, opened the session, emphasising the importance of international accreditation for education quality assurance and increasing graduates' employability. The CEENQA-2023 General Assembly was attended by European networks and foreign education organisations from various countries worldwide, including Germany, Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Northern Cyprus, Moldova, Turkey, and Ukraine, as well as international quality assurance networks such as ENQA, EQAR, INQAAHE, and APQN. The main goal of the CEENQA-2023 General Assembly was to discuss important issues related to the quality assurance of higher education and exchange best practices in transforming education systems, thus

contributing to the development of the professional community involved in external assessment.

During the General Assembly, CEENQA President Franci Demšar emphasised that Kazakhstan is successfully integrated into the international education space and demonstrates scientific and educational achievements in the country's higher education system. The head of CEENQA also highlighted the key role of accreditation agencies in promoting a culture of quality and education quality assurance.

Thematic seminars, an international workshop, and panel discussions on current issues in the quality assurance of higher education and ways to address them were held as part of the CEENQA-2023 General Assembly.

Dr. Alina Zhumagulova, the General Director of IAAR, received significant international recognition for her longstanding contributions and dedication to the field. She was honoured with the "Women Leaders in Educational Excellence" award during the International Conference "Futureland. Next Generation Education" held in Dublin, Ireland, on March 6-7, 2023. This accolade, established by the International Vocational Education and Training Association (IVETA), celebrates women leaders who have made substantial contributions to education development and the promotion of quality culture at the international level. Dr. Zhumagulova's receipt of this international award signifies a major achievement and recognition of IAAR's commitment to accreditation and ratings excellence.

In 2023, IAAR's working group focused on preparing self-assessment and documentation packages for international accreditation (evaluation) of hospital-type medical organisations following international standards and accreditation guidance by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua).

Another key task outlined in IAAR's 2023 Development Strategy was the post-monitoring (follow-up) process with ENQA (task 5.1.9). In February 2023, a plan of action to address ENQA expert recommendations within subsequent procedures was developed and approved. Activities included thematic analysis on student-centered learning issues and the preparation of reports on IAAR's post-monitoring efforts. A final report in English on IAAR's compliance with ENQA expert recommendations

was prepared and submitted to the ENQA secretariat, with the expert visit scheduled by the secretariat for 2024.

Furthermore, in 2023, IAAR staff participated in various international conferences and seminars, including events hosted by Odesa National Medical University, ASIIN, ENQA, IREG, INQAAHE, the 8th International Conference on Medical Education (ICME) in Baku, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), and the APQN Conference, among others. This active engagement further reinforces IAAR's commitment to international collaboration and knowledge exchange in the field of accreditation and quality assurance.

**Participation in international and research projects** is a significant aspect of IAAR's activities. One such project is the Erasmus+ initiative aimed at expanding access to and fostering the internationalisation of higher education.

On January 14, 2023, the Erasmus+ SAGRIS project concluded. In February 2023, IAAR prepared a final report for the three years of work, which was submitted to the grant holder for the compilation of the project's final report to be sent to the European Commission for review.

Since late 2022, IAAR has been involved in implementing Project GIZ No. 20.2212.7-002.00 "Professional Education for Economic Growth Sectors in Central Asia" (PECA). This project focuses on providing international programme accreditation services in food technology at partner universities, including Kyrgyz State Technical University named after I. Razzakov (KSTU) and Kyrgyz National Agrarian University named after K.I. Skryabin (KNAU) in Bishkek, as well as the Technological University of Tajikistan (TUT) in Dushanbe.

Roadmaps for conducting international programme accreditation procedures at partner universities were developed and approved in 2023. IAAR conducted training seminars on the theory, methodology, and techniques of international programme accreditation based on the ESG standards for university staff responsible for accreditation. Subsequently, partner universities prepared and submitted self-assessment reports on educational programmes for expert review by the EEP. Based on the EEP visit results in 2023, IAAR's Accreditation Council made decisions

regarding the accreditation of partner universities' educational programmes for periods of 3-5 years.

In 2023, IAAR continued its participation in the Erasmus+ project "Development of Bachelor's Programme in Agroecology with Dual Education in Kazakhstan (AGROKAZ)" as an associated partner, with further accreditation of the developed programme.

Participation in international projects enables IAAR to closely interact with the international academic community and collaborate actively with national and foreign universities, thus positively influencing the quality of educational services and expanding the horizons of international cooperation.

To further expand IAAR's participation in Erasmus+ international projects, continuous monitoring of new projects is carried out, and information about the Agency is provided to potential partners through the EU Login portal and the Partner Identification Form (PIF) sent to all potential partners.

In summary, in 2023, the team at the Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR) enhanced the quality of its international activities through extensive collaboration with leading partners, international networks, and foreign accreditation agencies, as well as active participation in various international events related to the quality assurance of higher education, conducting international research and projects.

### *SWOT analysis of activities*

The SWOT analysis reflects the implementation of strategic goals and serves as the basis for annual planning of IAAR activities (Table 4).

**Table 4. SWOT analysis**

<b>S (Strenght)</b>	<b>W (Weakness)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition of IAAR in Kazakhstan and abroad;</li> <li>- Full membership of IAAR in international networks and quality assurance associations;</li> <li>- Conducting international accreditation abroad;</li> <li>- Collaboration with foreign partners;</li> <li>- Harmonisation of IAAR standards with revised ESG and WFME standards;</li> <li>- Cooperation with stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental organisations within the Bologna Process;</li> <li>- Monitoring the implementation of recommendations by the EEP of accredited higher education institutions and/or accredited educational programmes;</li> <li>- Functioning of the IQAS (Internal Quality Assurance System);</li> <li>- Support by the WFME in activities related to the development of the national accreditation system for medical and pharmaceutical education;</li> <li>- Annual organisation of the IAAR International Forum on Quality Assurance in Education;</li> <li>- Professional team of IAAR;</li> <li>- Availability of a broad base of professional and competent experts;</li> <li>- Successful completion of the EQAR re-review and confirmation of status;</li> <li>- Conducting independent rating studies at national and international levels;</li> <li>- Conducting the international IAAR EUR rating;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient level of English language proficiency among agency staff;</li> <li>- Inadequate number of experts proficient in the required level of English language;</li> <li>- Absence of an electronic document management system;</li> <li>- Weak coverage of feedback from the professional community of employers due to their low interest;</li> <li>- Insufficient development of partnerships with foreign agencies in the field of VET.</li> </ul>



- Continuous and timely information dissemination to the public.	
<b>O (Opportunity)</b>	<b>T (Threat)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changes and amendments in education legislation, opening new opportunities for quality assessment of HEIs in Kazakhstan and several foreign countries;</li> <li>- Support from international quality assurance networks for IAAR;</li> <li>- Growing interest in IAAR's activities from foreign HEIs;</li> <li>- Access to national, European, and international educational and research resources;</li> <li>- Availability and use of IT technologies, digital architecture of the EPHE for the implementation of quality assurance processes that help improve the efficiency of processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Instability in the financial and economic situation both domestically and globally;</li> <li>- Emergencies (epidemics, COVID-19 pandemic, technological threats, natural disasters, military actions);</li> <li>- Increasing competition (including unethical practices) in the accreditation field;</li> <li>- Insufficient involvement of employers in educational activities of educational organisations.</li> </ul>

SWOT analysis made it possible to determine the mutual influence and effect of strengths and weaknesses, existing opportunities and threats; identify promising and priority areas for the Agency's development that will strengthen its competitive position, and serves as the basis for planning the IAAR's activities for 2024.

## Conclusion

The Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating, as a recognised international agency for the quality assurance of education, has achieved notable results in 2023 in external quality assurance of higher and postgraduate, vocational and technical, secondary education (international schools) and additional education in 15 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The IAAR regularly updates the external assessment methodology for types of accreditation, carries out constant monitoring, evaluation and analysis of educational activities of public organisations based on the development of feedback; identifies, summarises and disseminates best practices in the field of quality assurance and culture at the international and national level, systematically informs the general public about its activities, which contribute to qualitative institutional changes both in individual educational organisations and national education systems as a whole.

Expanding the boundaries of accreditation activities in 2023 (international accreditation was carried out for the first time in new educational organisations and states - the Dominica, Palestine, Armenia), strengthening the quality potential of experts and agency staff, the successful holding of the CEENQA 2023 General Assembly on the basis of IAAR, etc. allowed to increase the authority and the influence of the IAAR in the international market for accreditation services.

In 2023, the Agency encountered certain difficulties when conducting ratings. In particular, there was a decrease in the number of participants in the ratings, which is associated with the expansion of the competitive environment and the introduction of the national rating by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as a decrease in the total number of HEIs in the Russian Federation and Ukraine that participated in the IAAR International Ranking due to the continuation of the military-political conflict between Russia and Ukraine, as well as with a greater orientation of HEIs towards other international (world) rankings.

Prospects for the development of IAAR's international activities in 2024 are related to the implementation of the main tasks defined by the IAAR Development

Strategy for 2022-2026, further expansion of the geography of international accreditation, IAAR's participation in various international projects on issues of the quality assurance of education, and passing ENQA post-monitoring (follow-up).

In 2024, it is planned to expand the scope of international cooperation in the field of quality assurance to new countries, create opportunities for the exchange of personnel with other international agencies, and increase the visibility and activity of IAAR in new regions of the world.

