OPEN CALL TO HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) QUALITY EXPERTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE AFRICAN QUALITY RATING MECHANISM (AQRM) 2017/2018 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATIONS

The Association of African Universities (AAU) is pleased to invite Higher Education (HE) quality experts to apply to take part in the 2018 African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) Institutional Evaluations Verification/Validation process

PREAMBLE
The use of the AQRM instrument which supports the work of national, regional and continental Quality Assurance (QA) bodies was adopted by the Conference of the African Union Ministers of Education in 2007. The African Union Commission (AUC) was at the forefront in the development of this African QA improvement tool that will ensure that the performance of higher education institutions can be measured against a set of agreed criteria. This exercise is meant to help institutions carry out self-evaluations that support institutional quality culture development. Most African Higher Education Communities, including regional Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs), national and some individual institutions throughout all the 5 African regions took part in the development process of the The African Standards and Guidelines (ASG-QA) which will also be used in due course. This was out of a realization by African countries Higher Education Ministers that QA (Standards & Guidelines as well as Accreditation) is the most important tenet for revitalizing African higher education.

A pilot self-rating exercise was conducted in 2010 with 32 institutions. One of the results of this exercise was the 2014 revised version of the AQRM survey which came out of the experience and feedback from beneficiaries and the validation evaluation exercise that was done by QA expert teams in 9 universities. The same tool was also used in 15 selected African institutions in 2016/2017 by the HAQAA Initiative Consortium where AAU is one of the partners.

The implementation of the AQRM aims at fulfilling the main aim of the 2014, Addis Convention which is to enhance student and staff mobility through enabling the comparability of qualifications through the use of the same standards and improvement
This Activity is implemented by the Association of African Universities (AAU) as the African Union Commission (AUC)'s implementing Agency on Higher Education (HE) and Coordinator for the AUC’s Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2015-2025) Cluster on HE tool. AQRM supports African higher education institutions to take ownership of their own quality assurance processes and it is one means of supporting institutional quality. Secondly, this exercise enables individual institutions to improve their internal quality assurance systems in order to compete favourably at different levels of higher education ranking systems throughout the world.

This exercise, hopefully brings about the harmonization of African Higher Education QA and accreditation whose importance was noted by African countries higher education ministers during the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Arusha, Tanzania, 1981 when they came up with the 1981, Arusha Convention. The importance of this convention which was not implemented for many years was clearly illustrated by its revival under the 2014, Addis Convention which AAU as the African Union Commission’s implementing arm will now execute through the AQRM on a larger scale in 2018. AAU is also the “Voice of Higher Education in Africa”.

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES (AAU)

AAU was established in 1967 and is the current implementing agency of the AUC’s initiatives and activities related to HE. It is also the coordinator of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2015-2025) cluster on HE. This activity seeks to fulfil some of CESA’s 12 strategic objectives which are in line with revitalizing the quality of all aspects of Higher Education in Africa.

Vision
To be the leading advocate for higher education in Africa, with the capacity to provide support for its member institutions in meeting national, continental and global needs.

Mission
To enhance the quality and relevance of higher education in Africa and strengthen its contribution to Africa’s development.

Core Values
• Transparency and Accountability
• Equity and Inclusiveness
• Excellence and Professionalism
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• Responsiveness
• Sustainability
• Teamwork and Collegiality

Objectives of the Association
a. to promote interchange, contact and cooperation among universities and other institutions of higher education in Africa;
b. to collect, classify and disseminate information on higher education and research, particularly in Africa;
c. to promote cooperation among African higher education institutions in curriculum development, post graduate training, research, quality assurance, recognition of qualifications, the determination of equivalence of degrees, and other matters of special policy or practical interest to African higher education;
d. to encourage and empower members of the Association to address developmental challenges and become an effective voice in national, regional and global institutions;
e. to study and make known the educational and related needs of African universities and other institutions of higher education and, as far as practicable, co-ordinate the means whereby those needs may be met;
f. to contribute to the improvement of leadership, institutional management and the policy environment of African higher education;
g. to organise, encourage and support public fora for information dissemination and exchange and policy dialogue on issues of higher education;
h. to promote gender and social equity in policies on higher education and in the delivery of higher education services; and
i. to promote linkages with the international higher education community.

THE QUALITY ASSURANCE EXPERTS’ MAIN TASKS
1. Carefully read and analyse the assigned AQRM institutional questionnaires of two universities that have participated in the AQRM survey.
2. Participate in three-day visits to each university they are assigned to in order to tour university campus(es) and inspect buildings, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, computer centers, facilities and evaluate the quality of infrastructure, material resources and the overall environment.
3. Evaluate the quality of student support services and the overall academic staff profile (qualifications and rank).
4. Inspect relevant documents, as appropriate and as provided by the university at hand
5. Hold meetings with senior management, academic staff, students and other key
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6. Evaluate internal quality assurance processes of the university. The evaluation will take into account the AQRM survey questionnaires responses.
7. Based on findings, validate the self-rating of the university and assign an overall Quality Rating to the institution.
8. Provide recommendations on modalities and approaches for improving quality of the university’s education provision and the general improvement of the universities’ internal QA procedures and systems.
9. The QA Experts will be required to do an oral report presentation before leaving the institution and produce a written draft report 2 weeks after leaving the institution and send it to AAU.
10. AAU will send the draft report to each respective institution for input in track changes. The institution then returns the draft to AAU which sends the draft report to experts for final clean up.
11. The experts then submit the final report to AAU which then sends the final report to the respective institution.

REQUIRED HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY EXPERTS QUALIFICATIONS
1. A relevant postgraduate qualification.
2. At least 10 years of experience in the area of HE quality assurance or management.
3. Relevant knowledge and experience in HE quality assessments.
4. Experience in HE quality audits and accreditation evaluations.
5. Good communication skills in speaking and writing English and/or French. A good command of other AU languages (Portuguese and Arabic) is additional advantage.
6. Excellent interpersonal skills and proficiency in preparing evaluation reports.

HOW TO APPLY
1. Interested and qualified HE quality experts are invited to complete the online application form in this link: [https://www.research.net/r/AAUExp](https://www.research.net/r/AAUExp)
2. Apply before 30th November 2017
3. Applicants are kindly requested to include information relating to their knowledge and experience in Higher Education Quality Assurance, Program Assessment, Institutional
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MORE INFORMATION
1. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted within two weeks of the application deadline.

2. Teams of three international quality experts (two Africans and one European) will be set up to undertake the verification/validation missions. Each team of quality experts will ideally visit two universities from two different African countries. Each mission is expected to last for three days.

3. Before the evaluation visits, selected experts will be asked to participate in a 2-day preparatory workshop in January 2018 in Accra Ghana.

4. April 2018: AAU allocates and sends the completed AQRM surveys to experts selected for the AQRM Evaluation visits. The experts read through the AQRM surveys and if necessary, they raise questions to seek clarification from the universities in question.

5. May-November 2018: Experts do the verification/validation visits to institutions where at the end of their visit they give an oral report to the institutions and submit draft reports to AAU. The draft reports are sent to institutions for input in track changes. The institution returns the draft report to AAU which passes it on to experts who do the final report and send it to AAU. AAU then sends the final report to institutions.

6. A modest per diem to cover local travel costs and full board hotel accommodation will be paid to each quality expert during the missions. An additional honorarium will be paid to the experts team for the evaluation report writing. Flights and visa fees will also be covered by AAU.

7. Visits will be conducted in English (for English, Arabic and Portuguese speaking institutions) and in French for French speaking institutions. Expert teams may include one Arabic and one Portuguese speaker in needed.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF UNIVERSITIES
1. Logistical arrangements for the assessment visit including airport transport and identifying suitable accommodation for experts that is secure and affordable. N/B: Experts will be given a per diem for accommodation and food.
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2. Make provisions for local transportation of experts conducting the verification/validation visit.

CONTACT INFORMATION
1. For any technical challenges contact Frank Asefuah on: fasefuah@aau.org
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Read more about AAU from www.aau.org and www.blog.aau