

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Samoa Qualifications Authority Inclusion on the Asia Pacific Quality Register (APQR) – A Milestone in its International Recognition Work.**

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One of the milestones in the history of the Samoa Qualifications Authority especially working towards international recognition of Samoa qualifications as well as the SQA itself as a national Quality Assurance Agency became a reality when SQA was approved by the Asia Pacific Quality Network Council (APQRC) to be included on the Asia Pacific Quality Register in July 2022.

Having SQA recognized by esteemed standard setting Bodies and Networks responsible for Quality Assurance Agencies is a great achievement for the Post School Education and Training sub-sector and the SQA as an External Quality Assurance Agency nationally and internationally. The APQR process required the Samoa Qualifications Authority to initially conduct a Self-Review against the Criteria by the APQR in 2021. An Expression of Interest followed which was approved by APQN and prompted preparations and submission of the Self Review Report (SRR) with all supporting documents in early 2022. The APQR Acceptance Criteria is based on an External Quality Assurance (EQAA) assessment which found SQA to be ‘Substantially Compliance’ against the eleven (11) APQR criteria incorporating the Chiba Principles<sup>1</sup>. Full Compliance or Substantially Compliance with each Criterion is mandatory to meet the requirement of overall ‘Substantial Compliance’

‘The SQA Self Review Report is a very thorough and detailed examination taking into account all its Quality Assurance (QA) functions and activities carried out during the past 15 years since its founding in 2006. It also touched on some other functions of SQA’<sup>2</sup>. In addition the eleven criteria of Category, Operations, Mission and Objectives, Staff and Reviewers, Independence, Resources, Process and Criteria, Appeals, Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Evaluation, Agency Linkages were comprehensively substantiated with the corresponding evidence and documentation.

The SQA Self Review Report "Appendices", are very well analyzed against the APQR eleven (11) Criteria. Conclusions are supported by evidences, with verification of analysis, and information and views of independent stakeholders<sup>3</sup>.

The Review was led and facilitated by Dr Jagannath Patil, APQR Chair and Review Facilitator of the APQN Council as well as a Review Panel of three experts from the APQN Members including Prof. Dr. Jianxin Zhang, Chair of the APQN from China, Dr Tariq Al Sindi from Kingdom of Bahrain and Ms Malini Nair from the Fiji Islands. The Review was done in two phases (i) Documentation review and (ii) Interviews held with the SQA as well as selected stakeholders. Interviews were held from May 23-25, 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> Designed to provide guidance to both higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies interested in enhancing policies and practices.

<sup>2</sup> APQR Review Report 2022

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

The APQR Review Panel concluded that ‘Based on its review of documents, interviews, and validation of statements in the “SQA Self-review Report”, the Review Panel finds SQA of “substantial compliance with the APQR criteria”<sup>4</sup>.

SQA is elated to have received this International Recognition from one of the Quality Assurance Networks in which it has been a member for a number of years. ‘As APQR is part of the APQN that specifically looks at the Quality Assurance technical aspects with specific Criteria in place on the architecture of QA and relevant components it has been a difficult task trying to substantially satisfy the Criteria however we’ve successfully addressed and met all requirements and We are Included! Indeed a milestone! We are now on par with the International QA Agencies in the Asia Pacific Region’ *according to Gatoloaifaana Tilianamua Afamasaga, Chairperson of the SQA Board.*

‘APQR is a Register of External Quality Assurance Agencies that demonstrate certain thresholds of maturity and was launched by APQN as a stakeholder initiative in the Asia-Pacific Region. The independent External Review by peers is the backbone of the Register while the primary purpose of the Register is to acknowledge well developed Quality Assurance Agencies. So far 5 Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs) in the Asia Pacific region have successfully completed the review process to be included on the APQR. Another 4 QAAs are at various stages of the review process<sup>5</sup>.

SQA is the sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) External Quality Assurance Agency registered on the APQR from the 300+ membership of the APQN. Inclusion on the APQR is valid until July 2027.



<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> APQR Website.

