Beyond Compliance: Activating ESG Part 1.

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Why is it so difficult?

1. Legal and Regulatory Constraints

National laws may prescribe rigid procedures, making it hard to adapt ESG standards to local contexts or to innovate in quality practices.

2. Lack of Shared Understanding and Buy-In

Stakeholders (staff, students, management) may not have a shared understanding of the quality assurance purpose, leading to resistance or routine compliance rather than genuine improvement. Viewed as external control rather than an improvement tool.

3. Limited Institutional Capacity and Resources

Institutions—especially those with fewer resources—struggle to allocate sufficient time, funding, and expertise to internal review processes, action planning, and follow-up activities demanded by ESG standards. Administrative burden

4. Weak Integration with Core Teaching and Learning Operations

ESG-driven processes may operate parallel to "real" teaching and curriculum work, lacking real influence on course design, teaching practice, or student assessment.

5. Data, Evidence, and Evaluation Challenges

Difficulty in collecting, managing, and using data meaningfully to improve practice at the ground level—due to technological, cultural, or privacy constraints.

6. Organizational Culture and Change Management

Resistance to change among faculty and staff when faced with new documentation, reflective practices, and external audits.

ESG 1.1: Quality Assurance Policy

Content: Institutions must have a documented quality policy that reflects their strategic goals and ensures continuous improvement.

Requirements: Commitment from leadership, transparent communication, and involvement of stakeholders.

Reverse side: The difficulties of institutional diversity and responding to change, discrepancies between formal policies and real practices.

Suggestions: Regular review, continuous information for stakeholders, flexible adaptation to evolving environments.

ESG 1.2: Designing, Approving, and Regularly Reviewing Programs

Content: Education programs should be designed, approved, and regularly reviewed with transparent, documented processes to ensure academic goals and learning outcomes are met.

Requirements: Involvement of stakeholders (faculty, students, employers), relevance of curriculum, modern teaching methods.

Reverse side: Clashing stakeholder expectations, challenges adapting to rapidly changing labour market demands, administrative burdens.

Suggestions: Structured, periodic program evaluation, active monitoring of labour market needs, support for digitalization.

ESG 1.3: Student-Centered Learning, Teaching, and Assessment

Content: Methods of learning, teaching, and assessment should consider student diversity and abilities, supporting individualized progress.

Requirements: Diverse teaching methods, inclusive learning environments, ongoing feedback.

Reverse side: Complexity of adapting to changing student needs, faculty training, and resource limitations.

Suggestions: Professional development for faculty, integration of digital tools, use of differentiated assessment systems.

ESG 1.4: Student Admission, Progression, and Graduation

Content: The rules for student admission, progression, and completion should be transparent and fair, ensuring consistent measurement of academic achievement.

Requirements: Clear criteria, student support, career planning.

Reverse side: Balancing inclusivity and selection, managing varied progression paths, supporting disadvantaged groups.

Suggestions: Flexible study paths, mentoring, personalized support systems.

ESG 1.5: Faculty and Learning Support Personnel

Content: The competencies, training, and development of faculty and support staff should be ensured for high-quality education.

Requirements: Staff development plans, ongoing training opportunities, evaluation and feedback systems.

Reverse side: Funding shortages, motivation issues, workload and commitment of faculty.

Suggestions: Innovative development programs, recognition efforts, improved work environment.

ESG 1.6: Learning Support and Learning Environment

Content: Learning environments and support systems should enable students' successful development and participation.

Requirements: Physical and virtual learning spaces, accessible services, use of student feedback.

Reverse side: Unequal access, outdated infrastructure, integration of personal and online support.

Suggestions: Modern resources, digital solutions, development of inclusive services.

ESG 1.7: Information Management and Internal Data Collection

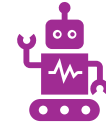**Content:** Institutions should collect and analyze relevant data continuously to support quality enhancement.

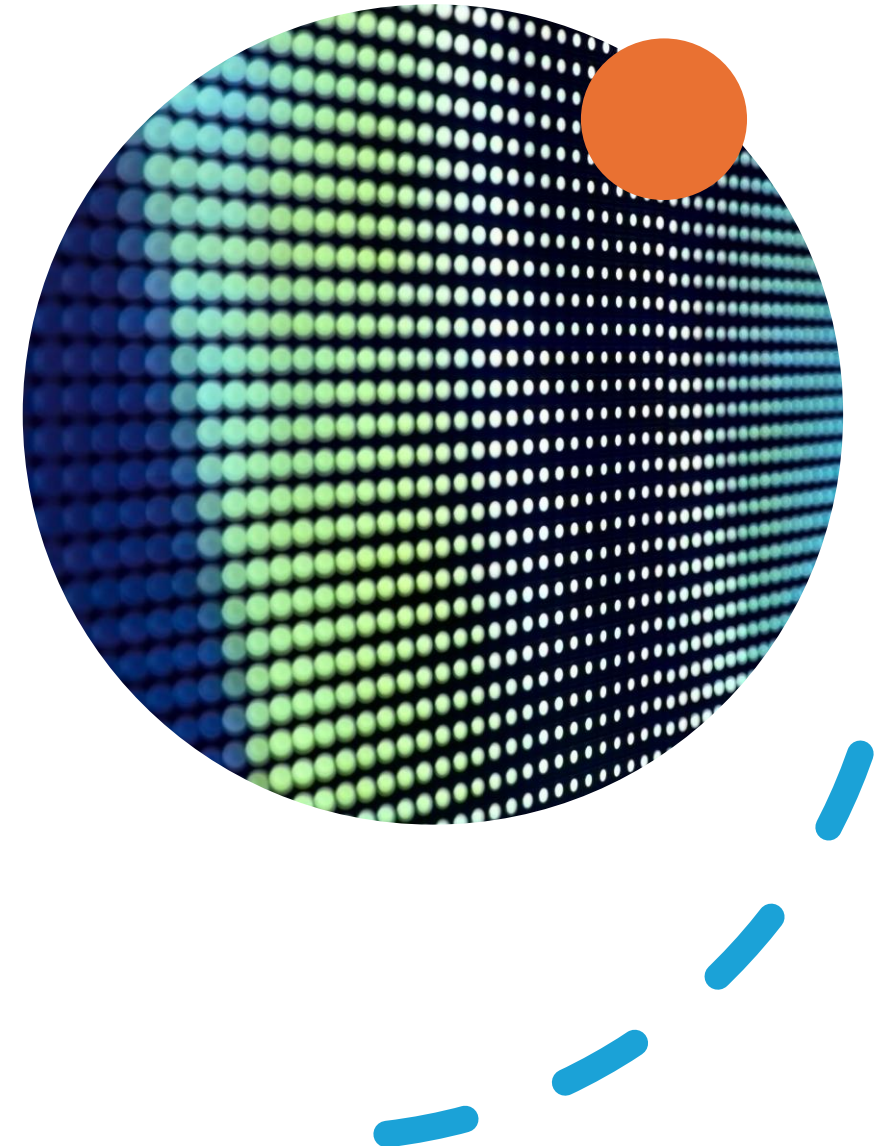**Requirements**: Data collection systems, compliance with data protection rules, analytical use of information.

Reverse side: Reliability and timeliness of data, data protection concerns, difficulties with information flow. Reasons for hiding...

Suggestions: Integrated information systems, awareness of the importance of data, transparent data management.

ESG 1.8: Public Information and Transparency

Content: Institutions should publish reliable, comprehensible, and accessible information about their operations and quality assurance.

Requirements: Regular updates, multi-channel communication, clear and useful information.

Reverse side: Overwhelming or irrelevant information, inequalities in communication, trust issues.

Suggestions: Targeted communication, feedback from students and communities, continuous improvement.

ESG 1.9: Ongoing Program Evaluation

Content: Educational programs should be evaluated to ensure quality and relevance in teaching.

Requirements: Regular, structured evaluation with stakeholder participation, feedback on results.

Reverse side: Acceptance of evaluation methods, complexity of data collection and analysis, usability of feedback.

Suggestions: Multidimensional evaluation system, technology support, publication and discussion of results and improvement opportunities.

ESG 1.10: Cyclical External Quality Assurance

Content: Institutions must be subject to external quality assurance on a cyclical basis. This process should align with the ESG and typically involves external evaluation, review, or accreditation led by a recognised quality assurance agency.

Requirements: Adherence to ESG criteria, transparency, participation of stakeholders, and actions on feedback from external reviews.

Reverse side: Challenges may include administrative workload, alignment with standards, resistance to outside scrutiny, and whether real value, rather than being a box-ticking exercise. (Art of pretending)

Suggestions: Translate findings from external reviews into decisions on internal processes, prepare effectively through self-assessment, focus on using the external input for development, and promote open dialogue between the stakeholders.

Thank you!