



Sustainable eThics Reviews of digital heAlth Technology dEsiGn In sub saharan afriCa (STRATEGIC)

Deliverable No. D1.3

Quality Assurance Plan

Submission date

28.06.2024



**This project has received funding from the
European Union's Horizon Europe Programme Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking
Under Grant Agreement no. 101145644**

Document Control

Deliverable	D1.3 Quality Assurance Plan
WP/Task Related	WP1 T1.3
Delivery Date	June 2024
Dissemination Level	SEN
Lead Partner	UoN
Contributors	All
Reviewers	GHS, EUREC, LUMSA
Abstract	This document describes STRATEGIC's Quality assurance strategies and processes. It includes established quality criteria and the assessment/review processes.
Key Words	Quality Assurance Process, Reviews, Quality Criteria

Revision History

Version	Date	Author(s)	Reviewer(s)	Notes
0.1	12.05.2024	Damian EKE	Bernd STAHL	First Draft
Final	26.06.2024	Damian EKE	Bernd STAHL	Final Version

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
List of acronyms/abbreviations	4
1.Introduction	5
1.1 Quality Objectives	5
2. Roles and Responsibilities	5
3. Quality Assurance Processes	5
4Deliverables	6
4.1 External Deliverables, Milestones, Tasks	6
4.2 Internal Deliverables, Milestones, Tasks	6
4.3 Form of Deliverables	6
4.4 File Naming convention	7
4.5 Quality of Deliverables	7
4.6 Timeline for QA Process	8
5.Quality Criteria	9
5.1Scientific Quality	9
5.2Clarity and Readability	9
Presentation	10
Review Practice	10

Executive Summary

As part of ensuring the success of the STRATEGIC project, a comprehensive Quality Assurance (QA) Plan is implemented to maintain high standards of project deliverables throughout the project lifecycle. This deliverable outlines this plan; defining quality objectives, roles and responsibilities of partners as well as quality metrics. This Quality Assurance Plan outlines a structured approach to ensuring the quality and success of the STRATEGIC project. By adhering to defined processes, conducting regular audits, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, the project aims to deliver high-quality outcomes that meet required expectations and regulatory requirements.

List of acronyms/abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
QAP	Quality Assurance Plan
DoA	Description of Action
PO	Project Officer
QA	Quality Assurance
WP	Work Package
SC	Scientific Coordinator

1. Introduction

STRATEGIC's Quality Assurance (QA) is based on the principles of prioritising quality of outcomes to meet expected standards. This plan ensures that the project's outputs meet the specified requirements and are consistent across different deliverables and partners. It helps in identifying potential risks early in the project lifecycle and facilitates continuous process improvement by identifying inefficiencies and areas for improvement. It applies to all STRATEGIC partners and has the following objectives:

1.1 Quality Objectives

STRATEGIC's quality assurance objectives are as follows:

- To ensure compliance with European Commission guidelines and standards as well as respect relevant institutional and national governance mechanisms
- Deliver high-quality deliverables that meet required standards (after internal or external reviews)
- Identify and mitigate risks to quality promptly.
- Foster a culture of continuous improvement within the project team.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

All project partners have a role to play in ensuring and or maintaining high quality of project activities and the project outcomes. However, the coordination team (GHS – the Scientific Coordinator; UBO – Administrative Coordinator and UoN – the project manager) has the overall responsibility for quality Assurance (QA) implementation and adherence. The scientific Coordinator takes the lead in this regard – QA activities- including internal audits, reviews and process improvements. In their respective roles, project partners are expected to adhere to QA processes and standards especially the ones created for the STRATEGIC project.

3. Quality Assurance Processes

The main target of STRATEGIC's Quality Assurance Process (QAP) are text-based Deliverables. The QAP mechanism proposed is not suitable for conferences, workshops, and milestones, for instance.

In STRATEGIC, a number of QA processes have been set up (see section 4). Regular audits on research activities are planned to assess compliance with defined standards. The Scientific Coordinator, assisted by the coordination team will review research activities before, during and after each activity. This is done by one of the Scientific Coordinator who has identified WP liaisons part of the planning, execution and delivery of WP activities.

The project has also established a version control and document management procedures to ensure accuracy and integrity of project documentation. To this end, the STRATEGIC project uses Microsoft Teams SharePoint where all project-related documents are stored. The project has also created a change log which serves as a formal change control process to manage changes to project scope, requirements and deliverables.

Additionally, STRATEGIC has proactively identified potential risks to the project activities and outcome and subsequently developed mitigating approaches for quality through a risk register (D7.2).

Finally, all project partners and their institutions recognise the need to provide training and support to project team members to ensure competence in executing QA processes effectively.

4 Deliverables

4.1 External Deliverables, Milestones, Tasks

External Deliverables, Milestones, and Tasks are those that are described in the Grant Agreement, the Description of Action (developed version of the proposal). External deliverables need to be submitted and approved by the EC. External milestones need to be reported to the EC. These external aspects are part of the Grant Agreement and therefore need to be met. Any discrepancy between actual and planned achievements needs to be explained and justified. Divergences from the DoA may require a contract amendment. External deliverables and milestones are normally linked to main events (workshops, conferences and seminars) and will go through thorough quality control by peer review (see section 4.6) before being published.

4.2 Internal Deliverables, Milestones, Tasks

In order to ensure that external deliverables (to be submitted to the EC) and milestones are met, all project members and particularly the work package leaders will develop the workplan in more detail. This should be done by inserting extra tasks or milestones into the workplan (including how they will execute the content, distribution of work, start date, end date, interim results, first draft circulation, partner feedback, and submission on portal). Work on these internal aspects will then be reported through an open issues list. The development of the workplan is important to develop a more detailed view of the work to be undertaken and the collaboration required in the project. The work plan template document was shared at a project meeting at the kick off meetings and will allow partners to contribute and give feedback.

WP leaders will be asked to report the development in their area of activity during the monthly update meetings. The general shape of each WP work plan is given in the DoA. This will need to be supplemented with internal deliverables (that are not submitted to the EC) and milestones that allow tracking progress of the project. The Scientific Coordinator, through a liaison ensure that Task leaders produce high quality reports of activities conducted in all tasks.

4.3 Form of Deliverables

Most STRATEGIC deliverables are reports. These will need to be written in accordance with the deliverable template shared with partners in the shared drive at the end of this deliverable and which is available on the shared webspace. It is important to note that even those deliverables that are not reports will require a report to be submitted on the participant portal at the due date. The participant portal will alert the PO of any late deliverables automatically. It is therefore important to adhere to the timeline in order to avoid late submissions. In addition, if there are some deliverables that may be submitted late, then this will be flagged to the PO immediately.

4.4 File Naming convention

In order to ensure a shared approach to file naming, the following convention for naming documents emanating from the project is suggested:

Deliverable number- deliverable title-

Example: D1.1 Name_of_deliverable

The filename should not contain any spaces. If the name of the deliverable consists of several words, spaces should be replaced by underscores '_'. All deliverables will be stored in the 'Deliverables folder' in the shared drive.

4.5 Quality of Deliverables

Quality control in the STRATEGIC project will be implemented through peer review. The vast majority of deliverables are reports. These will undergo a rigorous peer review process within the consortium to ensure high quality. Deliverables will normally be peer reviewed using a process overseen by the Scientific Coordinator. After review, deliverable authors are then asked to revise their report and provide an explanation of how they addressed issues raised in the review (see section 5 for criteria). Reviewers will be asked to comment on the revision. Revised deliverables and comments on revision are taken as the basis for the Scientific Coordinator to decide whether the deliverable can be accepted and submitted to the EC. The Scientific Coordinator will report on the review process to the general assembly.

The process of peer review must be included in the development of the deliverable. Sufficient time for it needs to be set aside. It should be part of the internal project plan and linked to clear dates and responsibilities (see 4.6).

All deliverables will go through the QA review process. Two reviewers will review for each deliverable before the final QA is carried out by the scientific coordinator who will return comments within a week of receiving the draft. The deliverables and institutions assigned to undertake the review are:

Table 1: Deliverables covered by QAP

Deliverables	lead	Due date	R1	R2
D1.1 – Scientific Coordination Plan	GHS	6	UoN	UEM
D1.2 - Scientific Outreach Plan	GHS	3	UoN	UEM
D1.3 –Quality Assurance Plan	UoN	3	EUREC	LUMSA
D2.1 Report on Training Needs	GHS	9	LUMSA	EUREC
D2.2 Ethics of Digital health Technology Design handbook	LUMSA	21	LETS	UEM
D2.3 Use case report	LETS	15	UoN	UEM
D3.1 STRATEGIC Stakeholder Engagement Handbook	UEM	12	LETS	EUREC

D3.2 STRATEGIC's Responsible Research and Innovation Approach	UoN	15	EUREC	LETS
D4.1 Recommendations report	UEM	33	EUREC	LUMSA
D4.2 Policy Brief	LUMSA	33	UoN	UEM
D5.1 Report on Established training centres	EUREC	6	UoN	LUMSA
D5.2 Training Materials including videos	EUREC	24	LETS	UEM
D5.3 Report on Training programme	LETS	36	UEM	UoN
D6.1 Plan for dissemination and exploitation of results including communication activities	UEM	3	UoN	EUREC
D6.2 Exploitation and Advocacy action plan	UEM	6	UoN	LETS
D6.3 Updated plan for dissemination and exploitation of results including communication activities	UEM	21	LETS	UoN
D7.1 Project Management Handbook	UBO	3	UoN	EUREC
D7.2 Risk Register	UoN	36	LUMSA	LETS
D7.3 Data Management Plan	UoN	6	UEM	EUREC
D7.4 The Project Synthesis	UBO	36	EUREC	LUMSA
D7.5 The project Website	UoN	3	LETS	UEM
D7.6 Updated Data Management Plan	UoN	24	UEM	LUMSA

4.6 Timeline for QA Process

The following timeline is an example of one way of ensuring that proper quality control through two rounds of peer review will be possible. All deliverable owners have been asked to suggest a timeline for each deliverable and presented this at the kick-off meeting. Deliverable owners will be free to add steps, such as early circulation and feedback on structure and outline of deliverables.

Possible timeline:

- t-90 deliverable owner circulates first structure of deliverable.
- t-60 deliverable owner sends first, internal draft of deliverable to WP partners. WP partners review deliverable for acceptability.
- t-30 deliverable owner circulates first draft to the Scientific Coordinator (SC).
- t-20 SC receives peer reviews.
- t-10 final version of deliverable to the SC (if no further changes).
- t Coordinator submits deliverable (either final or preliminary) on participant portal.

t = contractual delivery date, i.e. the last day of the month during which the deliverable is due

Attention: this means that deliverables need to exist in a rough first draft two months before the deadline and in a good state one month before

Example: Deliverable is due in month 6 (October 2024)

t 31.10.2024

t-90 31.07.2024

This will not be possible to adhere to for early deliverables but should be aimed at for later ones.

The coordination Team and the QAP

The Scientific Coordinator remains the QA Lead and is committed to oversee the reviews of all deliverables listed in Table 1 and providing comments on all Deliverables in Table 2. The SC will prepare the reviewers, share review criteria assess the quality of reviews. The role of the SC is equivalent to that of an editor in a peer reviewed journal.

Each deliverable will be reviewed by a minimum of two reviewers with relevant subject expertise from among the consortium partners, as indicated in table 1

Additional external peer reviewers may be drawn from the wide international networks of the Consortium, where appropriate as decided by the scientific coordinator.

5. Quality Criteria

STRATEGIC's QA is based on agreed criteria for scientific quality, clarity and relevance to audience.

5.1 Scientific Quality

In our effort to maintain scientific quality of the deliverables, STRATEGIC partners will ensure that deliverables are relevant to the project's objectives and goals. This means that deliverables should address the needs and requirements outlined in the GA. Whilst we acknowledge the previous publications (such as previous papers and deliverables) can be crucial in preparing our deliverables, these must be adapted in ways that suit the purpose of STRATEGIC project. It is critical for the consortium to avoid 'cut and paste' in our deliverable.

Furthermore, the reviewers will check that deliverables are factually correct and based on reliable information. They should not omit important details or leave out critical information. Therefore, scientific quality for STRATEGIC deliverables will be based on:

- Relevance to project objectives
- Accuracy and completeness

5.2 Clarity and Readability

Another criterion used in STRATEGIC's QAP is clarity and readability which are related to relevance to the audience. Unless otherwise specified, educated non-specialists are our audience. The language used in the deliverables should be **clear, concise and understandable, and relevant** to the intended audience. Technical jargon should be explained where necessary, and the document should be well-structured and organized. Deliverables will be prepared in

English language and where necessary translated into French and Portuguese by partners from countries that speak these languages. To ensure a good structure of the deliverables, a template for deliverables has been created and shared with partners on the Teams Drive.

Presentation

The professional quality of the deliverables must be upheld in all aspects. While the scientific content is the key quality criterion, questions of how the contents are presentation will shape the perception of the project and are therefore included in the review remit.

Review Practice

All deliverables should be saved in the 'Deliverables' folder in the STRATEGIC project Teams area.

Allocated reviewers will be informed by the review coordinator (GHS) that a deliverable is ready to review. In line with the timeline, reviewers will then review the document checking at least the following points:

Scientific Quality

- Relevant to project objectives
- Accurate and complete

Match to Audience

- Suitable for educated non-specialists
- Clear
- Concise
- Understandable (no unnecessary jargon)
- Relevant

Presentation

- Formatting
- Typos
- Grammar

Comments for improvements

Where shortcomings are observed, reviewers are asked to either directly make corrections in the text, using tracked changes or leave comments pointing precisely to the problems and suggesting solutions.

Reviews should be helpful and developmental, helping the lead-authors improve their work.

Overall comments to improve the documents should be collected in a comment box at the top of the document.