

External review report

# External Focused Review of **EQ-ARTS**



The European Consortium for  
Accreditation in Higher Education



External review report

# External Focused Review of EQ-ARTS

Copyright © 2018  
ECA OCCASIONAL PAPER

**European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education**



All rights reserved. This information may be shared, copied and redistributed for non-commercial purposes, provided that the source is duly acknowledged. Derivatives of this material are however not allowed.

Additional copies of this publication are available via [www.ecahe.eu](http://www.ecahe.eu).

Cover art: David Goehring (CC. by)



## Table of content

<b>1. Executive summary .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. The Review Process .....</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Scope of the Focused Review .....	12
3.2 Background and outline of the review process .....	13
<b>3. Findings of the Panel .....</b>	<b>22</b>
ESG 2.4 - Peer-review experts.....	22
ESG 2.5 - Criteria for outcomes .....	26
ESG 3.1 - Activities, policy and processes for quality .....	29
ESG 3.3 - Independence .....	33
ESG 3.4 - Thematic analysis.....	36
ESG 3.5 - Resources.....	38
<b>4. Panel Conclusion .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>5. Annexes.....</b>	<b>43</b>



## 1. Executive summary

This report analyses the compliance of EQ-Arts with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. It is based on a *focused external review* conducted between October and December 2020.

EQ-Arts intends to use the panel's report for its registration in the *European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR)*. The panel's report needs to be submitted to EQAR by end of January 2021.

The *focused external review* is to be seen as a follow-up review to the full review, which was carried out in 2018. The full review was organised by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). Based on the evidence provided, EQ-Arts issued a request for registration in EQAR. EQAR's Register Committee rejected the request in June 2019.<sup>1</sup>

In January 2019, EQ-Arts endorsed a proposal<sup>2</sup> to proceed to an EQAR *focused review* since such a possibility was laid down in EQAR's rule and regulations. In May 2020 EQ-Arts endorsed the decision to proceed with the timeframe for the focused review. EQ-Arts started with the preparation of the Self Evaluation Report (SER) and further documentation in January 2020. By taking up this option, EQ-Arts aimed to apply again for inclusion on the Register. The remit of the *focused external review* is the ESG that were assessed by EQAR's Register Committee as *partially compliant*.

EQ-Arts and EQAR agreed that the *focused review* would be organised by ECA. Based upon agreement the *focused external review* needed to be in accordance with the requirements of EQAR. In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR)<sup>3</sup>, the review panel was asked to provide evidence on the way as well as the extent to which EQ-Arts fulfils the

<sup>1</sup> EQAR's rejection letter, RC24/A63, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

<sup>2</sup> As of Minutes of Board Meeting, Annex 5, SER July 2020.

<sup>3</sup> The Chair of ECA and the chair of EQ-Arts have signed the ToR on 6th October 2020.



following standards, assessed by EQAR's Register Committee as *partially compliant* based on ESG and EQAR's requirements:<sup>4</sup>

- ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts
- ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes
- ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and process for quality assurance
- ESG 3.3 Independence
- ESG 3.4 Thematic Analysis
- ESG 3.5 Resources

The review panel were provided with EQ-Arts SER dated July 2020 in September 2020. As stated in the SER the purpose of the document was twofold. With the SER EQ-Arts provided an update on progress made since December 2017 when EQ-Arts initially submitted an application to EQAR for registration in the register. The second purpose of the SER was to provide detailed responses to the issues identified by EQAR for its rejection decision. The review panel considered the SER as core evidence since it has been developed in line with the agreed requirements as of the ToR.

Just before the online site-visit, which took place on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the review panel was informed by the ECA secretariat that in addition to the ToR the report should also confirm whether other findings of the full review report 2018<sup>5</sup> generally remain valid in the light of the *re-framing of EQ-Arts activities*.

The review panel for the *focused review* of EQ-Arts, appointed by ECA, was composed of the following members:

- **Maria E. Weber, (chair)**, Head of Department of Accreditation & International Affairs, Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria), Chair and secretary of the panel.
- **Amanda Bright**, Head of the School of Art. University of Brighton. Academic Member.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed description under chapter 3.2 of this report.

<sup>5</sup> ECA full review report 2018.



- **Gohar Hovhannisyan**, President. European Students' Union (ESU). Student Member.

On behalf of ECA **Sandra Marcos** supported the review panel as review coordinator prior and during the online site-visit.

The review panel considered the SER as the core evidence and starting point for the task assigned and to be fulfilled. Based upon the evidence and information provided from the SER and the interviews held during the online site-visit, the review panel concluded that EQ-Arts has complied with the mentioned ESG. The review panel's conclusion and recommendations in relation to the relevant ESG are as follows:

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015)	ECA Focused Review Panel November 2020	Recommendations
2.4 Peer-review experts	Compliant	<p>The review panel discussed on whether the fees charged for the training programme (except for students), might be a barrier to finding experts, on joining EQ-Arts' pool, or not. With regard to this, the review panel recommends EQ-Arts to evaluate on whether the fees are causing any barriers or not. If so, the review panel recommends creating some sustainable funding opportunity instead of charging a fee for the provision of trainings to potential review team members.</p> <p>The review panel learned from the interviews during the online site-visit, that some</p>



		language/background barriers might be in place when review experts come from a non-local context. In line with the regulation laid down in the Governance Framework article 15.5, the review panel recommends EQ-Arts ensures that due to the composition of review team members, at least one expert in the review team possesses adequate knowledge of the higher education system and has as well an active knowledge of the language of instruction relevant for the given context. They should maintain their existing good practice of ensuring that a translator is available to assist if any interviewee is unable to understand English.
2.5 Criteria for outcomes	Compliant	
3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance	Compliant	
3.3 Independence	Compliant	
3.4 Thematic analysis	Compliant	
3.5. Resources	Compliant	The review panel recommends EQ-Arts prioritizing the sustainability of resources; Covid 19 related changes to the resource management and to the expansion of services (online QA/E processes; focused seminars on issues derived from thematic analysis) should be taken further into account.

The review panel aimed to conduct a fair, critical and iterative dialogue. Based upon the convincing, professional presentation of EQ-Arts and the positive feedback from external



stakeholders shared during the interviews on EQ-Arts' professional way of conduct, the findings and observations made during the full review 2018 and not addressed in this focused review in a narrow sense, remain valid, irrespective of the *different framing* of EQ-Arts activities.



## Glossary of acronyms

AEC	Association Européenne des Conservatoires / The European Association of Conservatoires
CPAD	Creative and performing arts and design
CUMULUS	International Association of Universities and Colleges of Art, Design and Media
CILECT	Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinema et de Television
ECA	European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education/ Register
EQ-Arts	Enhancing Quality in the Arts
EQA	External Quality Assurance
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Area
ESU	European Students' Union
EUA	European Universities Association
HEI(s)	Higher Education Institut/Institutions
MusiQuE	Music Quality Enhancement, The Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders)
QA	Quality Assurance
QE	Quality Enhancement



## 2. The Review Process

### 3.1 Scope of the Focused Review

According to what has been said before, the scope of the *focused review* was to review EQ-Arts against ESG 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4. and 3.5. The *focused review* aimed at the provision of evidence, analysis, and conclusion for the level of compliance for each of the mentioned standard. In addition, based upon request from EQAR shortly before the online site-visit, the scope of the focused review was also to confirm whether the findings of the full review report of 2018 generally remained valid in light of the *re-framing* of EQ-Arts activities.

The review panel based its work on the ESG 2015 and took the guideline on the use and interpretation of the ESG issued by EQAR<sup>6</sup> into consideration. With regard to the EQAR document the review panel followed the version valid when EQ-Arts started the preparation of the SER.

EQ-Arts and ECA agreed with the ToR from October 2020 that the focused review had been set up in accordance with the requirements of EQAR. The focused review was based on the SER and supporting documents provided by EQ-Arts, which were submitted to ECA in July 2020 and to the review panel in September 2020. As outlined in the SER, the aim of the SER was *twofold: providing evidence to progress made since December 2017 when EQ-Arts initially submitted an application to EQAR for registration in the register, and also providing evidence on how EQ-Arts reflected on the compliance with each of the mentioned ESG*. With regard to the second, the SER aimed at provision of detailed responses to the issues addressed in EQAR's rejection decision.

<sup>6</sup> EQAR: Use and Interpretation of the ESG, for the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies, Version 2.



## 3.2 Background and outline of the review process

### Background of the review process<sup>7</sup>

With the full review in 2018, conducted by ECA, EQ-Arts aimed at registration in EQAR. With this *focused review* EQ-Arts is continuing this aim. As stated in the SER and being underlined in various interview sessions during the online site-visit, a registration on EQAR is of utmost importance for EQ-Arts, especially with regard to being a *leading provider of quality assurance and enhancement services to higher education institutions in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design (CPAD) sector in Europe*.<sup>8</sup>

In December 2017, EQ-Arts issued its application for entering the Register. Based upon the application and after consideration of clarification received by EQ-Arts in December 2017 and January 2018, EQAR's Register Committee confirmed eligibility in February 2018. The full report by ECA's panel on the compliance of EQ-Arts on the ESG was considered by EQAR in September 2018. EQAR's Register Committee sought and received clarification from the chair of the review panel. In addition, EQ-Arts was invited to make additional representations on the grounds for possible rejection in December 2018. In March 2019 EQAR's Register Committee considered EQ-Arts' additional representation. In the rejection decision from June 2019, the Register Committee concluded finally that EQ-Arts only achieved partial compliance for ESG 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5. It was concluded that for ESG 2.4, 2.5, 3.1 and 3.4 EQ-Arts had not yet been able to demonstrate in all areas, that the ESG are not only enshrined in its policies, but also implemented consistently in practice. It was stated further that partial compliance with ESG 3.3 related to questions of transparency and accountability to the sector. EQAR's Register Committee concluded overall that *EQ-Arts fails to meet some key requirements of the ESG*. Therefore, *in its holistic judgement* the Register Committee *remained unable to conclude that EQ-Arts complies substantially with the ESG as a whole*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This sub-chapter of the report draws upon information provided in the SER and EQAR's rejection letter, RC24/A63, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

<sup>8</sup> See: SER - Vision of EQ-Arts, July 2020.

<sup>9</sup> All reference to relevant for the description of the background of the review are from EQAR's rejection letter, RC24/A63, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019.



In January 2019, EQ-Arts endorsed a proposal to proceed to an EQAR *focused review* since such a possibility was laid down in EQAR's rule and regulations. In May 2020 EQ-Arts endorsed the decision to proceed with the timeframe for the focused review. According to EQAR's Procedures for Applications (see Article 21), EQ-Arts had the right to undergo a focused review addressing those issues that led to rejection of application, and reapply within 18 months from the date the rejection letter was issued. EQ-Arts decided to commission ECA for the coordination of such a focused review. EQ-Arts started with the preparation of the SER and further documentation in January 2020. In July 2020 it submitted its SER to ECA, which was submitted to the appointed review panel in September 2020. In October 2020, ECA and EQ-Arts agreed on the ToR of the review, following the requirements of EQAR and the rules and procedures of ECA to the conduction of such a focused review.

In contrast to a full review, this *focused review* addressed solely those ESG that were assessed by EQAR's Register Committee as only *partially compliant* and therefore led to rejection of EQ-Arts's application, which are the following: <sup>10</sup>

- ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts – *EQ-Arts does not stringently implement its policy as regards student members, the Register Committee remained unable to concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered EQ-Arts only partially complies with the standard.*
- ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes – *Given the limited evidence for formal assessment and the fact that the review panel appeared to have had concerns in one out of the two formal assessments carried out so far, the Register Committee remained unable to concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered EQ-Arts only partially complies with the standard.*
- ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and process for quality assurance – involvement of stakeholders (student member) in the governance - *Having considered the panel's clarification and EQ-Arts' additional representation, the Committee remained unable to identify a specific provision in EQ-Arts' suite of documents that rules out the possibility of reviewing an institution or programme that was previously consulted by EQ-Arts. The Register Committee therefore remained unable to concur with the*

<sup>10</sup> See: SER as of July 2020 and EQAR's rejection letter, RC24/A63, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

*panel's conclusion, but considered that EQ-Arts only partially complies with the standard*

- *ESG 3.3 - [T]he Register Committee still saw a risk in the way of recruitment of EQ-Arts Board members. The Register Committee noted that EQ-Arts relies on the Board effectively recruiting its own successors, but without a public call. The Committee saw a risk in the fact that due to the absence of any nominations by other bodies or a public competition, potentially suitable candidates cannot propose themselves unless contacted." The Register Committee thus concluded that "Given the concerns regarding the recruitment and appointment of EQ-Arts Board members the Register Committee, however, remained unable to concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered that EQ-Arts only partially complies with the standard.*
- *ESG 3.4 Thematic Analysis – [T]he Register Committee was satisfied that EQ-Arts is currently undertaking thematic analysis as understood by the ESG. Given that the results of those are not [yet] published the Register Committee, however, concurred with the panel's conclusion that EQ-Arts partially complies with the standard.*
- *ESG 3.5 Resources - In its additional representation, EQ-Arts provide updated figures for 2018 and a prognosis for 2019. While the Register Committee welcomed the positive development and outlook, it considered that EQ-Arts financial situation remained volatile and that it would require additional time to demonstrate full sustainability. The Register Committee therefore concurred with the panel's conclusion that EQ-Arts partially complies with the standard.*

According to its assigned task, the review panel focused on developments and compliance of the standards and areas addressed (as above). In addition, immediately prior to the online site-visit, the appointed panel was asked to confirm whether the findings of the full review report of 2018 generally remained valid in light of the *re-framing* of EQ-Arts activities. It is therefore understandable that these aspects and this particular request were not addressed in the SER. The review panel agreed with the ECA coordinator that the report would solely focus on the ESG as mentioned above but would in addition provide a statement on whether the panel was convinced that the findings of the 2018 full report generally remain valid in light of the *re-framing* of EQ-Arts activities.

EQ-Arts proactively indicated in its opening, introductory statement that, with the exception of the renaming of activities, which will be discussed later, all activities and processes are



conducted in terms of ESG compliance. Based on the information provided during the online on-site visit, the review panel confirms that the findings of the 2018 full review remain valid.

### Review process

The focused review of EQ-Arts was conducted with the timeline set out in the ToR signed by ECA and EQ-Arts supplemented by EQARs' request short before the online site-visit took place.

The review panel for the focused review of EQ-Arts was appointed by ECA and composed of the following members:

- **Maria E. Weber**, Head of Department of Accreditation & International Affairs, Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria), Chair and secretary of the panel.
- **Amanda Bright**, Head of the School of Art. University of Brighton. Academic Member.
- **Gohar Hovhannisyan**, President. European Students' Union (ESU). Student Member.

Following the ToR, EQ-Arts produced a SER that provided evidence for the review panel to draw its conclusions on the ESG under question. Prior to the online site-visit, each panel member was encouraged to use an ESG mapping grid for identifying evidence provided in SER and to support conducting the online site-visit. Findings from each panel member were aligned to the areas of inquiry, which were then linked to the specific interview sessions. Decisions of the panel were reached collectively. The review panel have produced the report on the basis of the SER and oral evidence given during the online site-visit. EQ-Arts will have the opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report.

In its approach the panel paid attention to the areas pinpointed by EQAR's Register Committee when assessing EQ-Arts compliance with the ESG, as they were addressed primarily in the SER. The review panel confirms that it was given access to all documents and interview partners it considered necessary to be consulted during the review process.





### Self-evaluation report (SER)

EQ-Arts started with the analysis of EQAR's rejection reasons given in July 2019. The drafting of the SER and the development of relevant documentation started in January 2020. The process was finalised in July 2020. The SER was submitted, as said before, to the review panel by September 2020. The SER addressed all areas relevant for the purpose of the focused review and provided as well overall information on the progress made since December 2017, when EQ-Arts for the first time submitted its request for inclusion on the Register.

The review panel concluded that EQ-Arts has set up a sound process for the development and writing of the SER, but also for the development of other new documents such as its renewed Governance Framework – reiterating EQ-Arts' principle 'enhancing quality in the arts'; its concept for thematic analysis in relation to which the first outcomes were published in September 2020. In addition, EQ-Arts reflected in the SER how they have actively addressed shortcomings regarding the nomination process of Board members and as well as the inclusion of student members in the governance of EQ-Arts.

Based on the SER and supplementary documentation, including the Governance Framework, the review panel is confident that EQ-Arts has taken steps during the past months to demonstrate its compliance with the standards under this focus review and maintain compliance with standards assessed positive during the full review in 2018.

### Online Site-visit

Due to the pandemic situation, an online site-visit was conducted on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Prior to the online site-visit, the panel held preparatory meetings aiming at identifying issues to be further explored during the online site-visit. The review panel members worked jointly on a mapping of the evidence provided in the SER against the ESG and the way EQAR's concerns have been addressed. The agenda for the online site-visit was prepared with the support of the ECA coordinator and the Executive Office of EQ-Arts. The agenda included interview meetings of the review panel with EQ-Arts Board members, the Executive Office, representatives from higher education institutions who had experience with the assessment conducted by EQ-Arts, as well as with agency's review experts including students.



The review panel agreed to share leading the individual interview sessions, however, this did not mean that only the panel member leading the session could raise and ask questions, the panel worked collaboratively and as a team.

The chair of the review panel took notes during the interviews held. At the same time it was agreed with all participants that the interviews were recorded. This was done solely for back-up purposes in case of technical problems during the meetings, such as losing of connection causing limitations in note taking.

The one-day online site-visit was concluded with an internal debriefing aiming at the formulation of preliminary conclusions regarding the level of compliance of EQ-Arts with the above-listed ESG.

For all necessary set-ups and requirements needed for the online conduction of the site-visit, the ECA coordinator supported the review panel. The review panel would like to thank ECA coordinator for taking care of all the support provided prior to and during the online site-visit.

### EQ-Arts in a nutshell

EQ-Arts has been a registered Dutch foundation since 2015. The roots of the foundation go back to the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA). At its core EQ-Arts aims at the provision of specialist workshops, advice, training courses and quality assurance exercises for the Creative and Performing Arts and Design (CPAD) education. EQ-Arts is to be considered as a *sector-specific* (CPAD), not-for-profit foundation, with a thorough governance and management structure in the spirit of a *lean / green organisation*, as stated during the online site-visit. EQ-Arts, as outlined during the online site-visit, aims at treating equally all higher education institutions in the CPAD field. The purpose is to make knowledge gained from various sources: from its Board members, the outcomes of its services and analysis, and its international project involvement, available to all. The EQ-Arts Board is composed in a transparent and strategic manner and includes relevant stakeholders. EQ-Arts considers itself as a 'bottom-up, lean and green organisation', demonstrating collective, broad ownership of the organisation and understanding of the needs and demands of the CPAD education field - while at the same time operating



independently. With regard to this, EQ-Arts is able to position itself specifically to address and serve the needs of and for the CPAD field of education. This understanding has been enshrined in its mission and vision in accordance with the *Governance Framework* of the Foundation. After the rejection decision taken by EQAR, EQ-Arts undertook an in depth review of its activities and policies. It realised that for the purpose of an external review, the previous suite of documentation could be open to interpretation or even misinterpretation. Its internal review has resulted in a new *Governance Framework* that guides all of their work with greater transparency, clarity and accountability

Since the last review, EQ-Arts has been and is active in various international projects such as Creator Doctus, aiming at facilitation of the implementation of 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle education in the CPAD field. This project draws on findings from the thematic analysis published in September, where one of the highlighted outcomes is to support the CPAD sector with embedding research into education provision. EQ-Arts also has a lead role in the extension of the Tuning CaloheX project, focusing on measuring and comparing achievements of leading outcomes in higher education and in issuing an international position paper on research in the arts - the Vienna Declaration.

EQ-Arts aims at being recognized as the *leading provider of quality assurance and enhancement services* in this particular field of education (CPAD) in Europe. In all its activities EQ-Arts follows the generic principles laid down in the ESG. EQ-Arts acknowledges the primary responsibility of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in assuring quality of their own provision and acts responsively to the diverse needs of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students; EQ-Arts aims at supporting HEI in development of quality culture and takes into account the needs and expectations of stakeholders involved.<sup>11</sup>

EQ-Arts provides its services to HEIs in the EHEA, providing both *Quality Assurance* (QA) (i.e. formal assessment – accreditation/revalidation) and *Quality Enhancement* (QE) (i.e. review, audit, benchmarking) exercises.

<sup>11</sup> See: SER – Mission EQ-Arts, as of July 2020.



During the online site-visit the EQ-Arts team underlined that there has been no change in principle and in practice to its quality assurance activities since the last review. The re-framing, as outlined in the revised EQ-Arts Quality Framework as of June 2020 addresses all activities that have been subject to the full review as of 2018. *Quality Enhancement* now includes the activities previously labelled as *Institutional and Programme ‘critical friend’ Enhancement Reviews*. As mentioned before, the *QE activities* are divided into three types: review, audit, benchmarking. According to the EQ-Arts’ Quality Framework, *benchmarking activities* are considered as external reference points intending to help HEI to identify strengths, weaknesses and best practices. In addition, they enable comparison between a range of different institutional cultures and programmes while also facilitating international cooperation between HEI in the CPAD sector. As stated in the documentation provided, EQ-Arts uses for the benchmarking activities either the ESG and/or national qualification frameworks.

As far as the formal assessment procedures are concerned, EQ-Arts has underlined in the SER and during the online site-visit, that these activities have been undertaken in partnerships with professional associations (i.e. MusiQue) and/or other national agencies that hold accreditation (i.e. NVAO). With regard to the said, the review panel considers EQ-Arts being a *cooperative facilitator organisation*, meaning that EQ-Arts conducts quality assurance activities in cooperation/partnership with or based on guidelines from other organizations (i.e MusiQue/NVAO).

EQ-Arts very clearly underlined during the online site-visit, in addition to the evidence provided in the SER that it does *not offer paid consultancy* services to institutions. As stated before, EQ-Arts is making knowledge gained either from the composition of its Board, or from of its quality assurance activities, analysis and involvement in international projects available to the arts education sector. As example, EQ-Arts is organising specialist workshops aiming at clarification of *benchmark standards*; training courses for potential reviewers and beyond that to be familiar with current developments in higher education quality assurance.

As stated in the SER, in the fourteen years since completing its first quality activity in 2006, EQ-Arts has undertaken 40 activities of which 8 have been QA and 32 QE activities.<sup>12</sup> As

<sup>12</sup> See: SER – Operating Context, as of July 2020.



far as the balance between the activities needs to be outlined it is stated in the SER, that 20% of activities are currently QA and 80% QE activities. The division per type of QE activities adding up to 100% are the following: 4% benchmarking: 62% Bachelor programmes, 76% audits: 29% Master programmes, 20% reviews: 9% PhD programmes.

With regard to the foundation's funding, EQ-Arts is dependent on the revenue from quality assurance exercises undertaken and other externally funded projects such as Erasmus+ projects.

EQ-Arts currently has two employees at the executive office and 14 members of the Board, including the CEO (ex officio). Given this, EQ-Arts should be considered as lean / green organisation, which aims at using competences, knowledge and experience of the Board members for various tasks – beyond a sole decision-making remit of tasks - Board members are as well actively involved in e.g. training of experts, development, conduction of thematic analysis, tasks related to treasuring etc. For the time being EQ-Arts is not in the position to increase the number of employees at the level of the executive office.

Referencing all the evidence provided, EQ-Arts underlined that all their work approach continues to ensure that all positive findings of the full review undertaken in 2018 remain valid.

### 3. Findings of the Panel

#### ESG 2.4 - Peer-review experts

**STANDARD:** External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts – *EQ-Arts does **not stringently implement its policy as regards student members**, the Register Committee remained unable to concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered EQ-Arts only partially complies with the standard.*

#### Evidence & Analysis

EQ-Arts specifies in its Governance Framework that the composition of review panels / peer review teams include a student member. As stated in the SER, since the external review conducted in December 2018 EQ-Arts has always included a student as panel member. In the total of 9 reviews, where 8 have been conducted in 2019 and one in 2020, all review panels have included a student member. EQ-Arts has established a register of peer-reviewers. As stated in the SER, currently the register holds out of 87 members plus 15 students (17%). For 35 peer-reviewers, due to the defined maximum period of service, has come to an end since 2017.

EQ-Arts' Governance Framework outlines, that recruitment of reviewers is done through a process of public advertisement and open application. Via the website of EQ-Arts' open invitations are issued for teachers, managers and professionals in the particular field of education to participate in annually offered external QA and QE expert training programmes. Participation in these trainings is, except for students, subject to a fee. Interested individuals have to submit their application including a CV, demonstrating experience and engagement in quality assurance practices. After participation in a training programme/initial and/or refreshing training, the Board of EQ-Arts considers recommendations from the trainers. The recommendations follow the set of defined selection criteria. The Board endorses



candidates who are then included in the register of reviewers. Students are invited through open calls, specifically launched via national student unions and ESU or via associations and national QA agencies. As per the Governance Framework, requirements are defined for academics, managers, students, and professionals / practitioners in the CPAD field. It is also outlined that an individual registration period is valid for four years for academics, managers, professionals/practitioners, and two years for students. Each individual can reapply when the term ends.

In line with the Governance Framework, the Board is responsible for approving the appointment and composition of review panels. The composition, relevant expertise and size of the various review panels depends on the scope and type of the exercise, with this being discussed with the HEI/the programme. As a minimum, a review panel comprises three members plus a review secretary. In all cases, it is guaranteed that the relevant stakeholders are part of a panel. Additionally, EQ-Arts aims to ensure that review teams have a balance of gender, geographic spread, relevant knowledge and expertise for the particular artistic/design field as well as general expertise in quality assurance. Where possible and appropriate, country-specific knowledge regarding arts higher education and legislation is taken into consideration as well. Due to the fact that all exercises are conducted in English, adequate language knowledge is also required.

In addition to the requirements to be entered into the register, EQ-Arts has defined further requirements for chairs. Aiming at assuring a professional conduct of the particular exercise in line with EQ-Arts overall principles, i.e. building trust between institutions and the review team, stimulate workflow and active participation of team members. All review team members have to declare that they are free of any conflict of interests. Examples for major conflicts of interests are stated in the Governance Framework. Prior to a particular exercise, the review teams are supported with tailor-made briefings; each exercise is coordinated by an employee of the EQ-Arts executive office, ensuring that the work of the review panel follows the published principles at all times.' (i.e. in addition to a minor re-ordering, I am suggesting we say 'published' instead of 'set-out'). The person assigned from the executive office act as liaison the institution/programme and the chair that in return has to liaise with other review team members.



Based on the evidence provided and inquiry during the online site-visit, the review panel is convinced that EQ-Arts works fully to its own requirements, aiming at compliance with the standard in question. EQ-Arts has well-defined processes and procedures in place for training, appointing, and nominating review teams. EQ-Arts supports the review teams with adequate trainings and briefings and ensures that they conduct the exercise assigned professionally. EQ-Arts has mechanisms in place to ensure independence of review team members, by implementing sound mechanism of no-conflict-of-interest. Impartiality checks start with the selection approach for potential review team members. EQ-Arts has developed clear criteria, defined in their governing frameworks and documents, which from the very beginning of a quality assurance process avoid bias or conflict of interest arising.<sup>13</sup> The Board is responsible to ensure that all work conducted by individuals on the auspices of EQ-Arts comply with the set working principles.

Overall, self-set work ethics, standards and principles are transparently documented and applicable for all activities and support an approach aiming for independence, objectivity, impartiality, and confidentiality. The ethics principles apply for all individuals and organisations working with EQ-Arts. EQ-Arts has demonstrated **stringent** efforts towards **ensuring the inclusion of students** in all its quality assurance exercises over the last years. The review panel is convinced that with the applied practice in place EQ-Arts has demonstrated effectively that the concern of EQAR's Register Committee is addressed now in line with the requirements of the particular ESG:

### Recommendations

The review panel discussed on whether the fees charged for the training programme (except for students), might be a barrier to finding experts, on joining EQ-Arts' pool, or not. With regard to this, the review panel recommends EQ-Arts to evaluate on whether the fees are causing any barriers or not. If so, the review panel recommends creating some sustainable funding opportunity instead of charging a fee for the provision of trainings to potential review team members.

The review panel learned from the interviews during the online site-visit, that some language/background barriers might be in place when review experts come from a non-local

<sup>13</sup> See: SER - Governing Framework - Ethics, as of July 2020.





context. In line with the regulation laid down in the Governance Framework article 15.5, the review panel recommends EQ-Arts ensures that due to the composition of review team members, at least one expert in the review team possesses adequate knowledge of the higher education system and has as well an active knowledge of the language of instruction relevant for the given context. They should maintain their existing good practice of ensuring that a translator is available to assist if any interviewee is unable to understand English.

**Panel conclusion: Compliant**

## ESG 2.5 - Criteria for outcomes

**STANDARD:** Any outcomes or judgements made, as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes – *Given the limited evidence for formal assessment and the fact that the review panel appeared to have had concerns in one out of the two formal assessments carried out so far, the Register Committee remained unable to concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered EQ-Arts only partially complies with the standard.*

### Evidence & Analysis

EQ-Arts has referred in its SER to a preparatory communication between EQ-Arts and EQAR. According to this, it was stated that at least five external quality assurance activities (EQA) should have been finalised and published on its website. It is further outlined, that since EQ-Arts formal independence from ELIA, EQ-Arts has completed 15 EQA, all reports have been published on the website. 4 out of these 15 completed activities have been formal assessments, for the purpose of accreditation and 11 enhancement reviews. 9 activities have been conducted recently during 2019 – 2020. 2 need to be qualified as *formal assessments* and 7 as *enhancement review* activities. For these activities, reports have been published on EQ-Arts website. According to these findings, EQ-Arts concluded in the SER that the initially stated minimum number of activities has been exceeded.

As mentioned briefly already before, EQ-Arts classifies its types of quality assurance activities in two main clusters, whereas the enhancement cluster is further divided in three types of activities. The review panel has taken the formal assessment and the enhancement review further into consideration, since these types reflect the, above mentioned 9 activities, and have consequently to the two types of reports/outcomes elaborated in the following:

- Quality Assurance > Formal Institutional & Programme Assessment leading to accreditation - such activities are *considered as an evaluation of an institution / programme in order to determine the degree to which it will, if approved, meet the*

*minimum threshold standards required to receive a licence to award academic qualifications. Accreditation is normally time-limited with periodic renewal.*<sup>14</sup>

- Reports include judgements, commendations and recommendations given against each standard for the purpose of formal accreditation (if the national legislation, another EQAR registered quality assurance agency allows it. As for the formal assessment EQ-Arts is mainly working in close cooperation with other quality assurance agencies, due to the fact, not being on the Register, EQ-Arts is not allowed to issue formal accreditation decisions).
- Enhancement activities > quality Enhancement reviews *are considered as a process of periodic review through which an already accredited programme is judged to continue to be meeting, and to what degree the threshold standards required for the accredited award. Validation, as a process of quality assurance, is also linked to evidence for the action an institution has taken to deliver quality enhancement of the provision throughout the period since the previous validation, the degree to which this enhancement has been achieved and the strategies in place to further that enhancement.*<sup>15</sup>
  - Reports include judgements, commendations, and recommendations that have no status in the process of formal recognition or accreditation.

In addition to the requirements stated above, all reports include references to both good practice and potential areas for further developments. Where applicable, the reports also refer to conditions, which include a defined timeframe and a clear expectation on what is needed to address the condition. The Board is responsible to ensure that the reports are evidence-based and comprehensive. Reports are submitted to the Board, which bases its decisions concerning recommendations, conditions, and accreditation on the basis of the evidence provided in the report received from the review panels.

As stated in the SER and underlined during the online site-visit, both types of external quality activities use either the EQ-Arts Framework for External Quality Assurance, which has been evaluated by the full review panel 2018, as substantially and by the EQAR

<sup>14</sup> Addressed in the full review 2018 as "EQ-Arts Institutional & Programme 'critical friend' Enhancement Process".

<sup>15</sup> Addressed in the full review 2018 as "EQ-Arts institutional accreditation and programme assessment".



Register Committee as compliant, or a compulsory national framework in case of accreditation decisions, i.e. NVAO Framework. The EQ-Arts Framework for EQA was revised in June 2020 EQ-Arts has defined 17 standards (including sub-standards), all thoroughly aligned with ESG part 1, in addition the ESG are used as criteria for judgements. The standards are the common basis for its types of external quality assurance activities. EQ-Arts provides institutions and programmes with supportive guidance on what is expected and how the various standards should be addressed.

With regard to the concern raised by EQAR's Register Committee, the review panel of the focused review concluded that EQ-Arts has **increased the number of formal assessments and enhancement reports over the last years**. EQ-Arts provides institutions/programmes with clear guidance on what standards/guidelines are applicable. The **applicable standards and criteria are defined and published in the EQ-Arts Framework**; EQ-Arts applies the ESG as criteria for judgements.

Formal outcomes, the reports of any quality assurance exercise undertaken by EQ-Arts are published on the website. EQ-Arts is supporting higher education institutions and expert teams with predefined templates, both providing clear guidance, fairness, and consistency for the set activities. The report templates guiding expert teams towards the development of comparable reports - addressing findings, evidence, commendations, recommendations, conditions. A person assigned from the executive office supports each expert team. The person, as stated before, acts as liaison person to the expert teams. One of the core tasks is to provide, prior to the review, a thorough briefing aiming at a consistent application of the given standards and criteria and the use of the report templates. In addition, each report is considered by the Board, which has to base its decision solely on the evidence brought together.

The review panel is convinced that EQ-Arts has developed a sound approach to guarantee fair and transparent decisions and judgements.

### **Recommendations**

None

**Panel conclusion: Compliant**



### ESG 3.1 - Activities, policy and processes for quality

**Standard:** Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and process for quality assurance – involvement of stakeholders (student member) in the governance - *Having considered the panel's clarification and EQ-Arts' additional representation, the Committee remained unable to identify a specific provision in EQ-Arts' suite of documents that rules out the possibility of reviewing an institution or programme that was previously consulted by EQ-Arts. The Register Committee therefore remained unable to concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered that EQ-Arts only partially complies with the standard*

#### Evidence & Analysis

The values, mission, and vision defined in its renewed Governance Framework have been confirmed throughout the various interviews held during the online site-visit. The mission and vision embedded in the Governance Framework is published on the website and is available to the wider public. The Governance Framework, including the mission and vision, forms the comprehensive documentation and core guidance for all of EQ-Arts' work. The information provided aligns with the document, evidencing an accountable and trust-based translation of the set aims, standards, rules, and principles. Beyond the information provided in the SER, it was underlined during the online site-visit, that one of the key quality aims of EQ-Arts is to ensure the quality of research-led and research-embedded education in the CPAD field. While taking into consideration the various viewpoints and different types of activities EQ-Arts are following or determined to, their baseline is to set thresholds to enhance, and support quality in education / provision of art education.

EQ-Arts is undertaking the following external quality assurance activities:

(1) Quality Assurance activities, including formal institutional and programme assessment leading to accreditation. EQ-Arts is providing these activities in cooperation and partnership with professional associations or national agencies that



hold accreditation and that are in the Register. As stated in the SER post the 2018 review, activities have included two collaborations with other independent agencies, e.g. NVAO.

(2) Quality Enhancement activities include reviews, audits, and benchmarking. Based upon the documentation provided, QE activities are considered as usually not being required by legislative frameworks, but being determined by institutions' own initiatives, striving for sound external feedback on quality systems in place while undertaking an external audit focusing on quality outcomes. As stated before, benchmarking activities are considered as external reference points intending to help HEIs identify strengths, weaknesses and best practices. In addition, they aim to offer comparisons with a range of different institutional cultures and programmes while also facilitating international cooperation between HEI in the CPAD sector. As for the *benchmarking EQ-Arts* uses either the ESG and/or relevant national qualification frameworks.

As mentioned above, in the fourteen years since completing its first quality activity in 2006, EQ-Arts has undertaken 40 activities of which 8 have been QA and 32 QE activities. Since June 2019 EQ-Arts has undertaken 9 quality assurance activities. 8 have been conducted in 2019, one in 2020. 2 have been formal assessments and 7 quality enhancement reviews.

The EQ-Arts Framework for EQA has been revised in June 2020 EQ-Arts. All standards defined are thoroughly aligned with ESG part 1, in addition the ESG are used as criteria for judgements. The standards are the common basis for its types of external quality assurance activities. All quality assurance activities have been developed with a sound stakeholder consultation and inclusion. Stakeholder involvement and orientation towards the needs of the particular CPAD sector is of utmost importance for EQ-Arts.

EQ-Arts ensures the involvement of stakeholders in its governance and work. As mentioned before, in all reviews conducted since December 2018 EQ-Arts has included a student as panel member. Expert teams consist of academics, managers, professionals / practitioners. In line with its set rules and principles, EQ-Arts ensures that stakeholder groups represent the relevant knowledge and expertise for the particular artistic/design field and general expertise in quality assurance. As far as the stakeholder inclusion in the governance of EQ-Arts is concerned, EQ-Arts had also



included a new student member in May 2020, since one stepped down. EQ-Arts issued an open call and also invited ESU for the nomination of students. The Board interviewed students and finally invited 2 students as members. In July 2019 EQ-Arts merged the up to then existing Executive Group and the Board; in addition a change of the statutes was necessary in order to increase the number of members and to reflect the new structure. By November 2020, 4 new Board members have been appointed with EQ-Arts' Board aiming to reflect stakeholder representation as a sector-specific agency. It was underlined during the interviews that the Board is to be considered as 'rounded', reflecting core stakeholders for the particular field EQ-Arts is working. i.e. Board members work as academics and also as professionals in the CPAD field.

In 2020 EQ-Arts conducted an internal Board governance skills audit to demonstrate the range of skills possessed by Board members. The outcome was considered as appropriate to fulfil responsibilities / tasks the Board has and in order to demonstrate a given balance of gender and regional diversity. Representing diversity is one of the principles of EQ-Arts.

Regarding the *core concern*, raised by EQAR's Register Committee, for this standard, the review panel considered sufficient evidence in the SER and as well during the online site-visit. EQ-Arts clearly underlined, that consultancy in the very narrow meaning, was never part of the remit of the foundation. The previous misunderstanding is probably based on the fact that it was not explicitly excluded, which now with the statement in the Governance Framework is clearly the case. Further, it was emphasised that because of the self-image—to provide all higher art education equal access to knowledge gained—and of the composition of the Board (finding analysed and disseminated via thematic analysis, workshops), it would be against the principles to engage EQ-Arts in paid consultancy work.

As it is stated clearly in the renewed Governance Framework, that *EQ-Arts does not accept, or enter into, exclusive contracts with individual institutions for paid consultancy where the purpose is to prepare for a forthcoming formal assessment conducted by EQ-Arts or to improve the academic provision in order to create a competitive advantage that would compromise the ability of EQ-Arts to form an independent judgement on the quality of that provision.*<sup>16</sup> For example: as far as external quality assurance procedures (formal assessment) EQ-Arts is providing

<sup>16</sup> See: SER - Governing Framework - Integrity, as of July 2020.



preliminary information aiming at setting scope and goals, timeframe, responsibilities of both the institution/the programme and EQ-Arts.

Based upon the evidence provided the review panel is convinced that the core issues addressed by EQAR's Register Committee, concerning this standard, have been resolved. EQ-Arts has clear processes in place, which do not allow any review of an institution or programme following (paid) consultancy activities. EQ-Arts has developed governing frameworks and documents clearly aiming at integrity, objectivity, and independent conduction of quality assurance activities. The renewed Governance Framework, supplemented by EQ-Arts Framework for EQA, is to be considered as core document guaranteeing, not only in practice but as well in public perception, professional conduct of defined activities and implementation of the set mission and vision.

EQ-Arts has developed processes and rules, which do not allow any type of **review activities following (paid) consultancy**. With reference to the sound rules on integrity, EQ-Arts has thoroughly addressed the concern of EQAR's Register Committee. EQ-Arts applies a clear distinction between external QA and other fields of work.

### **Recommendations**

None

**Panel conclusion: Compliant**





### ESG 3.3 - Independence

**STANDARD:** Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

ESG 3.3 - *[T]he Register Committee still saw a risk in the way of recruitment of EQ-Arts Board members. The Register Committee noted that EQ- Arts relies on the Board effectively recruiting its own successors, but without a public call. The Committee saw a risk in the fact that due to the absence of any nominations by other bodies or a public competition, potentially suitable candidates cannot propose themselves unless contacted.” The Register Committee thus concluded that “Given the concerns regarding the recruitment and appointment of EQ-Arts Board members the Register Committee, however, remained unable to concur with the panel’s conclusion, but considered that EQ-Arts only partially complies with the standard.*

#### Evidence & Analysis

As stated earlier, EQ-Arts has been founded as independent foundation in 2015 under Dutch law. The foundation builds on long standing experience in quality assurance and enhancement dating back to ELIA.

All members of the Board and all the expert team members act as individuals, free from bias, conflict of interests and are alert to the possibility of potential conflicts. As mentioned, with its revised Governance Framework EQ-Arts has developed a sound document with clear rules, principles and standards to guarantee independence in all regards, as addressed in this standard.

The Governance Framework is to be therefore considered as core document supporting the needs for operational, organisational and decision making independence. EQ-Arts has thorough processes in place regarding stakeholder inclusion in quality assurance processes, particularly students, but also the governance of the foundation. Appointment and nomination procedures for setting up the Peer Review Register and as well external review teams follow requirements defined in the core document - the EQ Framework for EQA and the Governance Framework. The same applies to decision-making processes, which are supported by definitions in the governing documents.



The review panel was provided with evidence during the online site-visit, that EQ-Arts, being a lean & green organisation applies bottom-up processes regarding the everyday-management of operational tasks. While respecting clear roles, these tasks are shared, between members of the Board and the executive office. It was stated during the meetings held, that the Board teams-up with the office on specific tasks. Board members are assigned specific tasks e.g. training of experts, work on templates, treasurer, and conducting thematic analysis, all in cooperation and collaboration with the executive office. The previous mentioned skills-audit supported the assignment of these specific tasks. In doing so, EQ-Arts demonstrated its broad ownership of the organisation, as well of its remit of work and set aims and goals.

During the online site-visit, the review panel was provided with further clarification regarding the nomination of Board members. The Board comprises of 13 members plus the CEO (ex officio).

The review panel learned that EQ-Arts has set out a policy in the Governance Framework regarding the nomination and membership in the Board. After the full review in 2018, EQ-Arts, as stated before, started a merger process of a former Executive Group and the Board. In addition to that the statutes have been reviewed in order to allow the increase of Board members and the inclusion of students. As a consequence EQ-Arts issued an open call for new Board members, which was also circulated to subject associations aligned with the work; subject associations aligned to the work are: *CUMULUS*, *Cilect*, and *MusiQue*. For the recent call in May 2020 these organisations were invited directly to nominate Board members, as full Board members with voting rights. They were offered full membership and all three organisations accepted and nominated a Board Member. At least two members are selected from the EQ-Arts Register of Peer Reviewers or close discipline networks as well. In March 2020 EQ-Arts circulated a call for student members, which resulted in 7 applications: 3 of the applicants were interviewed, with 2 appointed by the Board at the meeting in May 2020.

The Governance Framework defines the scope of responsibility of the Board, the constitution of the Board and as well the criteria for Board membership. The open call for Board members follows an analysis of the membership diversity, and the skills needed in order to ensure the needs of EQ-Arts and good governance. The periods of Board members are of three years, with the maximum to be renewed for three terms.



The European Consortium for  
Accreditation in Higher Education

According to the key outline of EQ-Arts being a sector specific foundation, the review panel considers the approach regarding nomination of Board Members to be reasonable. EQ-Arts has processes in place according to which **nominations of Board members can be issued by other bodies and because of the issuance of public calls, suitable candidates can propose themselves**. EQ-Arts has thoroughly addressed the concern of EQAR's Register Committee. EQ-Arts applies a clear distinction between external QA and other fields of work.

### **Recommendations**

None

**Panel conclusion: Compliant**



### ESG 3.4 - Thematic analysis

**STANDARD:** Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

ESG 3.4 Thematic Analysis – *[T]he Register Committee was satisfied that EQ-Arts is currently undertaking thematic analysis as understood by the ESG. Given that the results of those are not [yet] published the Register Committee, however, concurred with the panel's conclusion that EQ-Arts partially complies with the standard.*

#### Evidence & Analysis

According to its mission EQ-Arts commits itself to *promotion a strong quality culture across the European higher arts education sector, while embracing the four key principles towards QA set out in the ESG.*

The review panel was impressed by the in-depth information provided during the online site-visit regarding thematic analysis. EQ-Arts has developed a framework for analysing and sharing the outcomes of the external quality assurance activities it has undertaken alone and in cooperation with other professional associations between March 2017 and March 2020. Aggregated data gathered through these reviews provides an appropriate starting point to identify issues of relevance for CPAD education for further dissemination. In January 2019 EQ-Arts developed and endorsed a concept for the conduction of thematic analysis. The review panel understood the concept presented is to be considered as confirmed and formalised policy towards thematic analysis and as the basis for a third type of activities - beyond the formal assessment and the enhancement activities - both being review activities. The framework presented has explicit aims and objectives for various types of publications. As stated in the SER, the starting point for the new policy is that EQ-Arts acquires a lot of information in its assessments that is useful and interesting at an aggregated level. The new policy defines in detail the various types of reports to be produced, published and shared by the agency, i.e.: *Thematic Analysis report* - first has been published in September 2020 and draws on findings of 14 reports since 2016; such reports will be published on a triennial basis. Thematic analysis reports form the basis of further so-called *Survey Reports and Policy Reports*, which draws on information, and presentation of best practices in thematic areas or addressing existing and emerging strategic issues of relevance for the CPAD field of education. These reports will be published when issues of interest emerge. The core outcome of



the first thematic analysis dealt with four areas which can be summarised as follows and which will be followed up by Survey and/or Policy Report, further dissemination through talks, presentation on conferences, workshops: internationalisation beyond the mobility scheme - internationalisation embedded in the curriculum; graduate data / graduate careers to inform curriculum development; development of blended learning in the CPAD education field and embedding research in the CPAD education - beyond 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle programmes as well in bachelor/master programmes.

Based on the information provided the review panel concludes that, as it already was the case for the full review 2018, EQ-Arts conducts thematic analysis according to the ESG. A first **report has been published** in September 2020. Further reports and follow-up activities are planned.

### **Recommendations**

None

**Panel conclusion: Compliant**



### ESG 3.5 - Resources

**STANDARD:** Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

ESG 3.5 Resources - *In its additional representation, EQ-Art provide updated figures for 2018 and a prognosis for 2019. While the Register Committee welcomed the positive development and outlook, it considered that EQ-Arts financial situation remained volatile and that it would require additional time to demonstrate full sustainability. The Register Committee therefore concurred with the panel's conclusion that EQ-Arts partially complies with the standard.*

#### Evidence & Analysis

As stated in the SER and during the online site-visit, EQ-Arts was able to move its negative financial result from previous years into a positive position in 2019. Since its founding in 2015 EQ-Arts ensures a strict 'no or low' expenses strategy, which has been agreed upon by all involved. This approach is enshrined in the previously mentioned – 'lean / green' organisational outline. EQ-Arts adopts a collaborative approach to working, in which Board members are assigned specific tasks which in a 'mainstream' quality assurance agency would be conducted by staff members of a managing body / executive office. In doing so, EQ-Arts is in the position to limit staff and management costs. This collaborative approach has also another aspect: EQ-Arts has established further agreements of cooperation with arts specific networks ELIA - art, MusiQue - music, Cilect - film, CUMULUS - design and Paradox-Fine Art. Cooperation in these networks has led to partnerships in international projects i.e. Creator Doctus, CaloheX and being a cooperative facilitator of review activities i.e. NVAO, MusiQue resulting in an increased, positive financial outcome in the last year.

EQ-Arts is referring to a full-costing pricing model in its SER.<sup>17</sup> The total revenue is composed by the total of all sold services. The total revenue for 2019 was € 226,783 which resulted in a positive net result of € 38,314. With regard to the achieved revenues in 2019, the prognosis for 2019 was indicated with € 200.000. As for the overall financial plan, set out in an annex to the SER, it is explained that a break-even (total sales line crosses the total costs) revenue was estimated at €116,693 for 2018 and for 2019 with € 200.000. The calculations displayed in the SER demonstrate quite clearly that EQ-Arts has been hit by the pandemic situation. EQ-Arts' calculation of

<sup>17</sup> See: Annex 2 - Strategic Plan 2018-2020, part of SER as of July 2020.



total revenues for 2020 is € 93,746 which would lead, after deduction of the total costs, to a predicted net result of -€ 6.344.

As stated in the SER and further elaborated during the online sessions EQ-Arts is gathering its main income, which needs to cover all costs, from its activities under the various schemes.

*Formal assessment:*

- Conduction of formal assessments alone/or in cooperation with national quality assurance agencies or with other EQAR registered sector agencies.<sup>18</sup>
- Training of arts sector peer reviewers
- Providing trained arts sector peer reviewers for national QAAs

*Enhancement assessment:*

- Carrying out institutional & programme reviews
- Offering National Higher Arts Education workshops
- Providing institutional & programme professional expertise
- Providing workshops & papers at international conferences.

During the online site-visit the review panel learned that, in order to increase income revenues aiming at continuation of a sustainable financial situation, EQ-Arts is reconsidering its portfolio, including providing a clear classification of activities it can offer beyond the remit of quality assurance activities (reviews, training of experts), which are not to be considered as narrow *consultancy* activities. With this further diversification of its activities, EQ-Arts is aiming at creation of a third kind of product. Such products are to be considered as result of thematic analysis, survey, and policy reports. Analysis drawn out of these reports is to be disseminated to the CPAD education field via focused seminars, conference, and international project participation etc., all aiming at raising income. In the light of the Covid pandemic EQ-Arts is also reviewing its review practices considering the development of online QA/E processes.

While, as of the SER, in 2018 the EQ-Arts staffing consists of 0.7 fulltime equivalents (fte) the staffing was increased in 2019 towards 1,3 fte. 2019 EQ-Arts conducted eight reviews, one training, and one workshop. Since the Covid pandemic situation, EQ-Arts current staffing currently consists of 0,5 fte, however, due to the agile organisational structure and collaborative, cooperative approach towards sharing and undertaking defined tasks between the Board and the executive office, EQ-Arts has found a way to handle arising workload.

<sup>18</sup> It was mentioned during the online site visit that in some European region or in Central Asia EQ-Arts is in the position to conduct formal assessments following its own ESG compliant framework.



The review panel was provided with a candid, and realistic financial situation. EQ-Arts has put a lot of effort towards a break-even outcome for 2019, but there is no question that the Covid pandemic has had a negative impact on their growth. However, the review panel is convinced that EQ-Arts is committed to further increasing revenue, aiming at ensuring viability and weathering the **volatile global financial situation**. The review panel appreciates the approach of EQ-Arts towards further diversification of its portfolio, investing resources toward the creation of i.e. online services. The review panel agreed that EQ-Arts becoming an EQAR registered agency would make a significant and positive difference to their standing and in turn, their overall financial position.

### **Recommendations**

The review panel recommends EQ-Arts prioritizing the sustainability of resources; Covid 19 related changes to the resource management and to the expansion of services (online QA/E processes; focused seminars on issues derived from thematic analysis), as stated above, should be taken further into account.

### **Panel conclusion: Compliant**



## 4. Panel Conclusion

On the basis of the evidence provided in the SER, the supplementary documents and the additional evidence provided during the online site-visit, the review panel has concluded that EQ-Arts complies with the ESG. EQ-Arts strives towards further enhancement of its procedures and processes in line with key requirements of the ESG. EQ-Arts was able to demonstrate that progress has been made especially with regard to the issues EQAR's Register Committee had articulated as issues for rejection. The review panel was provided with rewritten and revised policies enshrining and implementing core requirements set for ESG. EQ-Arts has demonstrated its capacity towards professional, transparent, and accountable conduct via an increase of activities since the full review 2018. The review panel of the focused review therefore concludes, similar to the review panel from the 2018 full review, that it does not see any restrictions or further conditions and recommends that the EQAR Register Committee should accept the re-application from EQ-Arts.

### Summary of Compliances, Recommendations and Commendations

The review panel notes that EQ-Arts complies with ESG 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5.

The evidence presented in the SER and the discussions during the online site visit provided sufficient evidence to the evaluation panel that EQ-Arts has made a concerted effort to adequately address the deficiencies identified by the EQAR Register Committee, leading to the rejection of EQ-Arts application. EQ-Arts took EQAR's recommendations seriously into account aiming at enhancement of activities and processes in place being in compliance with ESG. The review panel likes to support the further enhancement of EQ-Arts professional conduct with the following recommendations and likes to conclude its focused report with some general commendations.

### *Recommendations*

#### ESG 2.4 – Peer-review experts

The review panel discussed on whether the fees charged for the training programme (except for students), might be a barrier to finding experts, on joining EQ-Arts' pool, or not. With regard to this, the review panel recommends EQ-Arts to evaluate on whether



the fees are causing any barriers or not. If so, the review panel recommends creating some sustainable funding opportunity instead of charging a fee for the provision of trainings to potential review team members.

The review panel learned from the interviews during the online site-visit, that some language/background barriers might be in place when review experts come from a non-local context. In line with the regulation laid down in the Governance Framework article 15.5, the review panel recommends EQ-Arts ensures that due to the composition of review team members, at least one expert in the review team possesses adequate knowledge of the higher education system and has as well an active knowledge of the language of instruction relevant for the given context. They should maintain their existing good practice of ensuring that a translator is available to assist if any interviewee is unable to understand English.

### **ESG 3.5 - Resources**

The review panel recommends EQ-Arts prioritizing the sustainability of resources; Covid 19 related changes to the resource management and to the expansion of services (online QA/E processes; focused seminars on issues derived from thematic analysis) should be taken further into account.

### ***Commendations***

The review panel commends EQ-Arts for their vision to establish an agile, lean, green organization that aims to offer support equally within their specialist sector.

The review panel commends EQ-Arts for their candour and transparency in the review and the embodied collaboration, trust and respect demonstrated between the Board, employees and reviewers.

The review panel commends EQ-Arts for the role they are playing within the sector, and the esteem and value in which they are held by colleagues that work with them as reviewers and institutions that are reviewed by them.



The European Consortium for  
Accreditation in Higher Education

## 5. Annexes

### 5.1 Programme of the on-line site-visit

TIMING*	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW <sup>i</sup>	ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED
9:00 – 9.45	Meeting of the expert panel.		
9.45-10-00	EQ-Arts Board arriving in the virtual meeting room		



The European Consortium for  
Accreditation in Higher Education

10:00 - 10:45	Meeting with the EQ-Arts Board	Lars Ebert (Chair) Lucien Bollaert (Treasurer) Dr. Sarah Bennett (Secretary) Albert Gili (student member) Maren Schmohl Paula Crabtree Professor Anthony Dean Professor Milena Dragicevic Sestic	ESG 3.1 ESG 3.3 ESG 3.4 ESG 3.5
10:45 – 11:00	Discussion among panel members		
11:00 – 11:45	Meeting with the EQ-Arts executive office	Professor John Butler Sally Mometti	ESG 3.1 ESG 3.4 ESG 3.5 ESG 2.4 ESG 2.5
11:45 – 12:00	Discussion among panel members		



12:00 – 12:45	Meeting with the students experts	Fleur Sophie de Boer Tereza Pavelková Elena Cemerska Lena Passlick	ESG 2.4 ESG 2.5
12:45 – 13:30	Lunch		
13:30 – 14: 15	Meeting with external experts (academic and employers)	Klaus Jung Rainer Usselmann Ingrid Grunwald Karen Harsbo Manuel Jose Damasio Dr. Anton Rey  Due to a misunderstanding about time zones, <i>Tamiko O'Brien</i> and <i>Annie Doona</i> inadvertently joined the meeting of HEI's recently evaluated. Both made short statements about their experience as external experts (the meeting they should have been in), and then left to ensure there was no conflict of interest in the discussion.	ESG 2.4 ESG 2.5



14:15 – 14:30	Discussion among panel members		
14:30 – 15:15	Meeting with HEI's evaluated recently	Petr Francan – Faculty Dean JAMU Osamu Okamura – Faculty Dean Liberec Jeroen Chabot – Dean WDKA Martin Prchal – Chair MusiQuE Board	ESG 2.4 ESG 2.5
15:15 – 15:45	Meeting among panel members to agree on the main findings		
15:45 – 16:00	Final debriefing meeting with EQ- Arts Board and Executive Office	Lars Ebert (Chair) Lucien Bollaert (Treasurer) Dr. Sarah Bennett (Secretary) Albert Gili (student member) Maren Schmohl Paula Crabtree Professor Anthony Dean Professor Milena Dragicevic Sestic  Professor John Butler Sally Mometti	



## 5.2 Documents provided by EQ-ARTS

- EQ-Arts Self Evaluation Report – EQAR Focused Review 2020, as of July 2020
- Call for Student Board Member, as of March 2020
- Terms of Reference between EQ-Arts and ECA, as of October 2020
- Application by Enhancing Quality in the Arts (EQ-Arts) for Inclusion on the Register / Renewal of Registration – Minutes of Telephone Conversation, as of November 2020 – as part of an E-Mail by ECA coordinator submitted on: 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020 – for amending the article 6 in the ToR.





The European Consortium for  
Accreditation in Higher Education

[ [www.ecahe.eu](http://www.ecahe.eu) ]