

Approval of the Application
by Quality Assurance Unit of the Flemish Higher Education
Council (VLUHR QA)
for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register

Register Committee
 26-27 November

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 Ver. 1.0
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| Application of: | 2023-08-10 | | |
| Agency registered since: | 2013-05-07 | | |
| Type of review: | Targeted | Site visit: | 2024-03-22 |
| External review report of: | 2024-09-26 | Submitted: | 2024-10-08 |
| Review coordinated by: | European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA) | | |
| Review panel members: | Achim Hopbach, Matej Drobnič, Nuria Comet, Philippe Emplit | | |
| Decision of: | 2024-11-27 | | |
| Registration until: | 2029-09-30 | | |
| Absented themselves from decision-making: | Irina Duma | | |
| Attachments: | 1. External Review Report, 2024-09-26 2. Eligibility Clarification Minutes, 2023-09-29 | | |

1. The application of 2023-08-10 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 2023-09-05.
3. The Register Committee considered the targeted external review report of 2024-09-26 on the compliance of VLUHR QA with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).

Analysis:

4. In considering VLUHR QA's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account the following activities:
 - Programme assessment in Flanders
 - European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
5. The activities below are not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to the application inclusion on the Register:

- Support of programmes and institutions
- Accreditation training initiative laboratory animal science
- Coordinating the discipline specific learning outcomes for bachelors and masters in Flemish higher education
- External evaluator of European projects
- Learning Network of Educational Support staff (LNO)

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6. The Register Committee found that the report provides sufficient evidence and analysis on VLUHR QA's level of compliance with the ESG.

7. With regard to the specific European Standards, the Register Committee considered the following:

ESG 2.1 – Consideration of internal quality assurance

8. In its last decision for renewal of registration (of 2020-03-16), the Register Committee found that VLUHR QA only partially fulfilled the requirements of the standard, as the ESG Part 1 was not sufficiently addressed in the main activities of VLUHR QA.

9. The Register Committee understood from the panel report that, since the last review, VLUHR QA has started employing a new framework for assessing programs in Flanders, which consists of eight quality features (QF). The new framework is stipulated by Flemish decree and must be implemented by the QA agencies evaluating programmes in Flanders.

10. The Register Committee learned from the panel analysis that the new quality framework still does not directly address certain elements of ESG 1.1, ESG 1.2 and ESG 1.4. There is no explicit mention that institutions must have a public quality policy (ESG 1.1) or processes for programme approval (ESG 1.2); nor it is addressed explicitly that "the internal processes of the university to ensure the monitoring of support processes for students at all stages of the lifecycle" (ESG 1.4).

11. The Register Committee also learned that VLUHR QA has addressed the missing elements only in the *Guide for drawing up a self-evaluation report* for higher education institutions. These elements are not covered in the *Manual Programme Review*, the main document followed by the external reviewers.

12. While the Register Committee understood that the new Flemish Framework addresses ESG to a higher extent than the previous one, the absence of ESG 1.1, ESG 1.2 and ESG 1.4 in the Framework and in the Manual raises concerns about the possibility of them being overlooked during the assessment. **Therefore, the Register Committee found that VLUHR QA only partially complies to the standard and highlighted the panel's recommendation on including the content of the Guide for drawing up a self-evaluation report in the Manual Programme Review.**

ESG 3.4 – Thematic analysis

13. In its last decision for renewal of registration (of 2020-03-16), the Register Committee found that VLUHR QA only partially fulfilled the requirements of the standard, as the agency did not publish thematic analysis based on the findings of external quality assurance activities.

14. The Register Committee learned from the panel’s analysis that VLUHR QA has completed three thematic analysis reports since their last review and the number of reports aligns with the level of activity of the agency. Additionally, thematic analysis has been integrated into VLUHR QA’s daily work and in the current Policy Plan (2023-2027).

15. Furthermore, the Register Committee understood that VLUHR QA focusses on the thematic analyses being relevant to higher education stakeholders and ministry representatives, rather than solely concentrating on the outcomes of external review results.

16. The Register Committee was able to follow panel’s conclusion that VLUHR QA is now compliant with the standard.

Conclusion:

17. Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that VLUHR QA demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) as follows:

| Standard | Previous decision (2020-03-16) | Review panel conclusion | Register Committee conclusion |
|----------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 2.1 | Partial compliance | Compliance | Partial Compliance |
| 2.2 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 2.3 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 2.4 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 2.5 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 2.6 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 2.7 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.1 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.2 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.3 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.4 | Partial compliance | Compliance | Compliance |
| 3.5 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.6 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.7 | Compliance | (not expected) | Compliance (by virtue of applying) |

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18. The Register Committee considered that VLUHR QA only achieved partial compliance with some standards. In its holistic judgement, the Register Committee concluded that these are specific and limited issues, but that VLUHR QA continues to comply substantially with the ESG as a whole.

19. The Register Committee therefore renewed VLUHR QA's inclusion on the Register. VLUHR QA's renewed inclusion shall be valid until 2029-09-30¹.

20. The Register Committee further underlined that VLUHR QA is expected to address the issues mentioned appropriately and to resolve them at the earliest opportunity.

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¹ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §3.25 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

Application by Quality Assurance Unit of the Flemish Higher Education Council (VLUHR QA) for Renewal of Registration

Minutes of Telephone Conversation

Register Committee

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|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Date of the conversation: | 2023-09-29 |
| Representative of VLUHR QA: | Patrick Van den Bosch |
| Representative of EQAR: | Melinda Szabo |

1. VLUHR QA has submitted on 2023-08-10 an application for renewal of registration on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) based on a targeted review.
2. In order to prepare the deliberations of the Register Committee on the eligibility of the application and VLUHR QA's activities within the scope of the ESG, EQAR contacted VLUHR QA via telephone to clarify the matter(s) below.
3. VLUHR QA agreed to clarify the matters by means of a telephone conversation.
4. VLUHR QA does not operate in Hungary, Germany, Portugal, Sweden and USA. The listed countries in it is eligibility application are related to reviewed higher education institutions in Flanders that offer joint programmes with institutions located in these countries. VLUHR QA has however carried out an external QA site visit to a campus of a Flemish higher education institution located in South Korea, following its currently established procedures.
5. VLUHR QA clarified that its '*support of programmes and institutions in Flanders and elsewhere*' is not a new consultancy activity, although in recent years it has gained more traction, in particular among universities of applied sciences. This activity is separated from VLUHR's regular QA activities within the scope of the ESG and this clear separation was confirmed by the panel in the past external review of VLUHR (see VLUHR QA Review Report 2019, p. 14).