

**Approval of the Application**  
**by The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and**  
**Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA)**  
**for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register**

**Register Committee**  
 3-4 April 2024

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<b>Application of:</b>	2023-04-12		
<b>Agency registered since:</b>	2019-02-01		
<b>Type of review:</b>	Full	<b>Site visit:</b>	2023-10-03
<b>External review report of:</b>	2024-01-10	<b>Submitted:</b>	2024-01-25
<b>Review coordinated by:</b>	European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)		
<b>Review panel members:</b>	Ewa Kolanowska, Padraig Walsh, Paris Tsartas, Pegi Pavletic,		
<b>Decision of:</b>	2024-04-04		
<b>Registration until:</b>	2029-01-31		
<b>Absented themselves from decision-making:</b>	Yiannis Kasoulides		
<b>Attachments:</b>	1. <a href="#">External Review Report, 2024-01-10</a> 2. <a href="#">Minuted clarification with CYQAA (eligibility), 2023-04-20</a>		

1. The application of 2023-04-12 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 2023-05-02 having considered clarification received from CYQAA on 2023-04-20.
3. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 2024-01-10 on the compliance of CYQAA with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).

**Analysis:**

4. In considering CYQAA's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account
  - Institutional evaluation – accreditation
  - Departmental evaluation – accreditation
  - Program evaluation – accreditation

- Joint program evaluation – accreditation
- Evaluation – accreditation of cross border education, offered by local institutions in member states or in third party countries (including e-learning programs of study and franchise programs of study).

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5. The Register Committee found that the report provides sufficient evidence and analysis on CYQAA’s level of compliance with the ESG.

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

### **ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals**

7. In the decision on the for inclusion of CYQAA on the register ([of 2019-11-05](#)), the Register Committee raised concerns regarding the shortcomings of the appeal procedure regarding the independence of the processes and the lack of clearly defined and formal complaints procedure.

8. From the external review report, the Register Committee learned that the Complains Policy is well established and higher education institutions have already used the possibility to submit a complaint (18 until the time of the external review).

9. The Register Committee further learned that CYQAA has revised its Appeals Procedure and now sets Advisory Committee of Experts (ACE) - groups of experts that examine and give opinion on the grounds for appeals to CYQAA’s Council. Despite the updated policy, the Council still holds the powers to make the final decision whether there are grounds for an appeal and can dismiss or uphold the appeal.

10. Furthermore, the Committee noted that the current Appeal Procedure is not entirely clear as it may suggest that an ACE is appointed for each appeal that is allowed for consideration by the Council, whereas in practice it is set only when the Council proposes to reject an appeal and needs advice from external experts.

**11. The Register Committee welcomed (changes made related to the complaints procedure) and found the earlier concerns related to the complaints procedure addressed. The Committee, however, found that CYQAA is yet to demonstrate an independent functioning of the Appeals Procedure, where the final decision is not with CYQAA’s Council. Having in mind the shortcomings related to the Appeals Procedure, the Register Committee concurred with the panel conclusion that CYQAA only partially complies with ESG 2.7.**

### **ESG 3.1 – Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance**

12. The Register Committee noted the concerns raised by the panel that CYQAA’s Strategic Plan (2020-2025) is rather generic, with no specific activities and clear timeframes. Furthermore, the Committee noted that the panel did not see any evidence of public, annual corporate or activity plan than operationalise the Strategic Plan.

13. The Register Committee understood by the panels analysis, that the agency involves representatives from both public and private universities, students and regulated professions. However, as underlined by the panel, the involvement of private higher education institutions and many public and private colleges and their students is very limited and CYQAA should further widen their engagement in its governance and evaluation processes.

14. **Considering the lack of comprehensive and rather generic Strategic Plan and the shortcomings in the involvement of stakeholders from all higher education institutions, public and private colleges, the Register Committee concurred with the panel and found that CYQAA only partially complies with ESG 3.1.**

### ESG 3.3 – Independence

15. In the decision for inclusion of CYQAA on EQAR (of 2019-11-05), the Committee raised concerns regarding the shortcomings related to the operational independence of CYQAA and the close interlinkage between the agency and the responsible ministry.

16. Despite some progress being made by consultation with key stakeholders on the appointment of Council members and the Minister, the Register Committee noted that the Council members are still appointed by the Council of Ministers, upon recommendation by the Minister responsible for higher education.

17. The Register Committee took note of the panel’s concerns regarding the operational independence of the agency, The Committee understood that CYQAA cannot hire its own staff and is fully relying on secondments from the central Government and the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

18. The Register Committee further noted, as underlined by the panel, that despite being fully independent in defining its evaluation methodologies, CYQAA is still challenged by the limits set in the provisions of the national legislation regarding engaging stakeholders in the development of methodologies (see issue raised under ESG 2.2 in the external review report).

19. Following the panel’s analysis, the Register Committee expressed its concerns that the operational independence of CYQAA remains constrained by the close link and dependence on the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth regarding the appointment of the Council members, hiring of staff and engaging stakeholders in the development of methodologies. **Therefore, the Register Committee concurred with the panel conclusion, and found that CYQAA remains to be partially compliant with ESG 3.3.**

20. For the remaining standards, the Register Committee was able to concur with the review panel’s analysis and conclusion without further comments.

**Conclusion:**

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

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Standard	Previous decision (2019-11-05)	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.2	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.3	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.4	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.5	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.6	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.7	Partial compliance	Partial compliance	Partial Compliance
3.1	Compliance	Partial compliance	Partial Compliance
3.2	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.3	Partial compliance	Partial compliance	Partial Compliance
3.4	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.5	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.6	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.7	Compliance	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

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

23. The Register Committee therefore approved the application and renewed CYQAA's inclusion on the Register. CYQAA's renewed inclusion shall be valid until 2029-01-31<sup>1</sup>.

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

<sup>1</sup> 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 The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) for renewal of Registration

## Minutes of Online Conversation

Register Committee

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Date of the conversation:	2023-04-20
Representative of CYQAA:	Erato Ioannou
Representative of EQAR:	Blazhe Todorovski, Melinda Szabo

1. CYQAA has submitted on 2023-04-12 an application for renewal of registration on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).
- [2.] In order to prepare the deliberations of the Register Committee on the eligibility of the application and CYQAA's activities within the scope of the ESG, EQAR contacted CYQAA via Zoom to clarify the matters below.  
  
CYQAA agreed to clarify the matters by means of an online conversation.
- [4.] EQAR Secretariat requested a clarification for the review and approval of programmes of study offered via the Franchise Method by local HEIs, which has been reported as an external quality assurance activity outside the scope of the ESG. In the previous application of CYQAA the activity has been considered as an activity within the scope of the ESG.
- [5.] CYQAA representative clarified that the procedure is a desk-based review and considers it as an administrative process where the agency simply reviews the documentation submitted by the local institution (for a programme offered by a foreign institution), in order to verify that the conditions for the provision of cross-border education are fulfilled. CYQAA further added that the process follows the national legislation meant to document that the programme has been already accredited by the foreign (offering) institution.
- [6.] CYQAA representative also clarified that the activity "Evaluation – accreditation of cross border education", concerns the evaluation of outgoing franchise programmes of study (when a local institution awards its own academic title via the franchise method via an overseas higher education institution) and is an activity within the scope of the ESG. The external evaluation process applied is the one for cross-border quality assurance of higher education as described in the application of CYQAA (see activity no 4). This is a systematic procedure, which examines the programme (design, development, student-centred learning, teaching, assessment, student admission, progression, recognition resources and student support etc). An external evaluation committee conducts a site visit at the overseas institution and writes the

report. The report and the institution's scrutiny are examined by the Council which makes the final decision for the program's accreditation or rejection.

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