

**Approval of the Application  
by High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher  
Education (HCERES)  
for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register**

**Register Committee**  
27/28 June 2022

**Ref.** RC35/A107  
**Ver.** 0.1  
**Date** 2022-06-23  
**Page** 1 / 6

<b>Application of:</b>	2020-12-22
<b>Agency registered since:</b>	2011-05-14
<b>External review report of:</b>	2022-04-27
<b>Review coordinated by:</b>	European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)
<b>Review panel members:</b>	Pedro Teixeira (chair), Maiki Udam (secretary), Iuliu Gabriel Cocuz, Isabel Ortega
<b>Decision of:</b>	2022-06-28
<b>Registration until:</b>	2022-02-28
<b>Absented themselves from decision-making:</b>	Jacques Lanares, Beate Trembl
<b>Attachments:</b>	1. External Review Report, 2022-04-27 (separate file) 2. <a href="#">Clarification by the Review Panel, 2022-06-14</a> 3. <a href="#">Substantive Change Report, 2022-06-20</a>

1. The application of 2020-12-22 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 2021-01-21.
2. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 2022-04-27 on the compliance of HCERES with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).
3. The Register Committee took into account clarification provided by the chair and secretary of the review panel.
4. The Register Committee considered HCERES' Substantive Change Report of 2022-06-20 as part of the application.

**Analysis:**

5. In considering HCERES's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account:

- *Evaluation of programmes and degrees;*
- *Evaluation of doctoral schools;*
- *Evaluation of French higher education institutions;*
- *Evaluation of foreign programmes and of foreign institutions.*

## Register Committee

27/28 June 2022

Ref. RC35/A107

Ver. 0.1

Date 2022-06-23

Page 2 / 6

6. The evaluation of research entities and of research organisations, the (discontinued) evaluation of territorial clusters of higher education institutions as well as the activities by the Science and Technology Observatory (OST) and the French Office for Research Integrity (Ofis) are outside the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to HCERES' registration on EQAR.

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

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

### ESG 2.1 – Consideration of internal quality assurance

9. The review report showed that several standards of ESG Part 1 (1.1, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7, 1.9, 1.10) are not addressed in (international) programme accreditation. While HCERES explained to the panel that they adapt their standards according to the foreign context, this creates a situation where a study programme might be accredited by HCERES without having been assessed against the full ESG Part 1.

10. The panel considered that (international) programme accreditations are small in number compared to (national) programme evaluations and other activities of HCERES. The Register Committee, however, considered that the issue at hand is not an occasional or statistical error, but a structural and systemic deficiency for an entire external quality assurance activity of HCERES.

**11. As a programme accredited by HCERES will be regarded as ESG-aligned by the public, confirmed by the entry of those programmes in DEQAR, the lack of full ESG Part 1 coverage represents a substantial shortcoming. The Register Committee was therefore unable to concur with the panel's conclusion that HCERES complies with the standard, but concluded that HCERES only partially complies with ESG 2.1.**

12. In the Substantive Change Report, HCERES informed EQAR of new versions of its standards for institutional, Bachelor/Master programme and PhD programme evaluation, each available in a domestic version used for the 2022/23 evaluation campaign and in an international version.

13. The Register Committee noted that the international versions are translations of the domestic versions with specific additions, and include a mapping against ESG Part 1. HCERES comments further suggested that simplification and efficiency were the main drivers for the change, rather than a change of the standards' substance. Based on the information

provided and the analysis by the panel of the previous standards the Register Committee had confidence that ESG Part 1 remains adequately reflected in the new version of these standards.

14. Given that the standards for international programme accreditation remain unchanged HCERES, however, continues to only partially comply with the standard.

## **ESG 2.2 – Designing methodologies fit for purpose**

15. The panel underlined (see clarification) that changes between evaluation campaigns are usually not major.

16. In its Substantive Change Report, HCERES explained that it enhanced the participation of stakeholders in the annual review of the processes and criteria for the next evaluation campaign.

**17. The Register Committee concurred with the panel's conclusion that HCERES complies with the standard.**

## **ESG 2.3 – Implementing processes**

18. The panel noted that HCERES programme evaluation panels do not meet with students during review visits. The panel discussed the new follow-up process introduced for institutional evaluation only, but noted that some questions remained regarding the added value given that there is no analysis or feedback in direct response to follow-up reports.

19. The panel considered that HCERES made improvements since the last review, as site visits were not carried out for programme evaluations at all previously and given there was no follow-up process previously.

**20. While the Register Committee acknowledged that significant progress has been made, it did not consider that HCERES complies with the standard yet in light of the limited added value of the follow-up process and the fact that students are not interviewed during site visits. The Committee therefore did not concur with the panel, but concluded that HCERES remains partially compliant with ESG 2.3.**

## **ESG 2.4 – Peer-review experts**

21. In the last renewal of registration, HCERES was found to be only partially compliant with the standard due to the lack of students involved in the programme evaluation panels.

22. The panel confirmed that HCERES has since involved students in all types of evaluations within the scope of the ESG.

**23. The Register Committee concluded that the matter has been addressed and concurred with the panel's conclusion that HCERES complies with the standard.**

24. The Committee further took note of HCERES' Substantive Change Report and the newly launched open call for the recruitment of peer-review experts.

**Register Committee**

27/28 June 2022

## ESG 2.5 – Criteria for outcomes

25. In the last renewal of registration, HCERES was found to be only partially compliant with the standard due to the criteria for institutional evaluations leaving too much room for interpretation and resulting difficulties in their consistent application.

**Ref.** RC35/A107

**Ver.** 0.1

**Date** 2022-06-23

**Page** 4 / 6

26. The panel confirmed that HCERES has since refined its criteria and introduced several other steps to promote consistency in the application of these criteria.

**27. The Register Committee concluded that the matter has been addressed and concurred with the panel's conclusion that HCERES now complies with the standard.**

## ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals

28. In the last renewal of registration, HCERES was found to be only partially compliant with the standard since its appeals and complaints processes were only just set up and not yet reviewed by an external panel; a specific concern was whether the decision-making on appeals was fully independent from those in charge of the appealed report/decision.

29. The panel considered that HCERES' appeals and complaints processes were clearly defined and communicated. The panel noted that HCERES had not received appeals or complaints since 2016.

30. The panel clarified that it considered the appeals committee's composition suitable. While HCERES Board members indeed serve on the appeals committee, the Board does adopt neither evaluation reports nor accreditation decisions. In addition, one external expert is part of the committee.

**31. The Register Committee agreed that the appeals committee was sufficiently independent given that the HCERES Board does not adopt the reports or decisions that are being appealed. The Committee therefore concurred with the panel's conclusion that HCERES complies with ESG 2.7.**

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

32. The panel identified some room for improving HCERES' stakeholder involvement in order to make it more systematic across the entire organisation.

33. The panel further noted that HCERES had not yet adopted a new strategic plan at the time of the review. At the same time, the review report showed that HCERES was able to continue to function and fulfil its evaluation mission despite the lack of a strategic plan.

34. The Register Committee considered that these were not major issues and concurred with the panel's conclusion that HCERES complies with the standard.

### ESG 3.3 – Independence

35. The Register Committee took note of HCERES' Substantive Change Report, confirming the change of legal status from an independent administrative authority into an independent public authority as of 1 January 2022. The panel took note of this as a forthcoming change and considered it as a consolidation of HCERES' independence.

36. The conditions and processes for a dismissal of the HCERES Board or President were not analysed by the panel. The Register Committee noted that the [general legal framework for independent public authorities](#) only allow a dismissal for strictly limited reasons.

37. The Register Committee concurred with the panel's conclusion that HCERES complies with the standard.

### ESG 3.4 – Thematic analysis

38. The panel considered that HCERES' recent activities have been focused on research and bibliometric analysis; analyses drawing on the results of evaluations within the scope of the ESG have not been produced regularly since the summary reports that HCERES/AERES used to produce following earlier evaluation campaigns.

39. The Register Committee therefore concurred with the panel's conclusion that HCERES only partially complies with the standard.

### ESG 3.6 – Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

40. The panel noted that the representatives of institutions and reviewers gave different opinions on the possibilities for feedback

41. The Register Committee agreed with the panel's analysis that this indicates that the feedback system might not yet be fully implemented and that there was a need to systematise and make more coherent the available feedback instruments.

42. The Register Committee further noted that the only partial compliance with ESG 2.1 and 3.4 is a regression since the last review and thus does not reflect positively on the agency's internal quality assurance arrangements.

43. In light of these reservations the Committee was unable to concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered that HCERES only partially complied with the standard.

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

Register Committee

27/28 June 2022

Ref. RC35/A107

Ver. 0.1

Date 2022-06-23

Page 5 / 6

## Conclusion:

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

Standard	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance
2.2	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.3	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance
2.4	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.5	Full compliance	Compliance
2.6	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.7	Full compliance	Compliance
3.1	Substantial compliance	Compliance
3.2	Full compliance	Compliance
3.3	Full compliance	Compliance
3.4	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.5	Full compliance	Compliance
3.6	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance
3.7	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

## Register Committee

27/28 June 2022

Ref. RC35/A107  
Ver. 0.1  
Date 2022-06-23  
Page 6 / 6

46. The Register Committee considered that HCERES only achieved partial compliance with some standards. In its holistic judgement, the Register Committee considered that HCERES resolved the previously partial compliance with ESG 2.4, 2.5 and 2.7, and has made visible progress in relation to ESG 2.3 (e.g. in regards to using site visits in programme evaluations), even if HCERES remains only partially compliant. The Committee further considered that the partial compliance with ESG 2.1 stems from a relatively small activity of HCERES. On balance, the Committee concluded that HCERES continues to comply substantially with the ESG as a whole, despite the significant regression with regard to ESG 2.1 and 3.4, judged as compliant in the last review.

47. The Register Committee therefore renewed HCERES's inclusion on the Register. HCERES's renewed inclusion shall be valid until 2027-04-30<sup>1</sup>.

48. The Register Committee further underlined that HCERES is expected to address the remaining issues 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 §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

## Application by HCERES for Renewal of Registration

Clarification provided by the Panel

Register Committee

<b>Date of the conversation:</b>	2022-06-14
<b>Panel members:</b>	Pedro Teixeira (chair), Maiki Udam (secretary)
<b>Representative of EQAR:</b>	Colin Tück

Ref. A107  
Date 2022-06-20  
Page 1 / 2

1. HCERES has submitted on 2020-12-22 an application for renewal of registration on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). On 2022-05-06, HCERES submitted the external review panel's report of 2022-04-27.
2. In order to prepare the deliberations of the Register Committee on HCERES' compliance with the ESG, EQAR contacted the Panel to clarify the matters below.

### ESG 2.1 – Consideration of internal quality assurance

3. The panel clarified that the standards for evaluation of international programmes and the criteria for accreditation of international programmes are separate: either one or the other set is used, depending on whether the programme seeks an evaluation or accreditation.
4. While some international institutions seek both an institutional accreditation and the accreditation of some or all of their programmes, this is optional: programmes can (and do) apply for accreditation without an institutional accreditation.
5. The panel understood that the criteria for international programme accreditation were developed with a “minimalist” approach and hence were very brief.
6. The panel considered that ESG Part 1 was insufficiently covered in international programme accreditation, but did not consider this a substantial problem given the small number of such accreditations. It nevertheless means that if an international programme applies for programme accreditation alone not all dimensions of ESG Part 1 are assessed.

### ESG 2.2 – Designing methodologies fit for purpose

7. The panel explained that HCERES takes into account the feedback from institutions and stakeholders between evaluation campaigns. These lead to minor adjustments or clarifications to the procedural documents or the

standards from one campaign to the next, but there are no major changes usually.

Register Committee

Ref. A107  
Date 2022-06-20  
Page 2 / 2

### ESG 2.3 – Implementing processes

8. The panel considered that HCERES significantly improved its practice in terms of site visits. Despite the fact that students are not interviewed in programme evaluations, these now all include a site visit, which was not the case previously.
9. The panel took into account that a follow-up process was introduced at least for institutional evaluation. Even though the understanding was not fully consistent, this was a significant improvement compared to the last review.
10. For those reasons, the panel considered that HCERES progressed from partial to substantial compliance, while not yet being fully compliant with the standard.

### ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals

11. The panel considered there was a significant improvement in this area, as there was no appeals system in place at all at the time of the last review; now HCERES provides clear processes for both appeals and complaints.
12. The panel took into consideration that the HCERES Board does not adopt or approve evaluation results, these are each individual panel's responsibility; for international accreditation, there is a permanent accreditation commission that makes decisions and that is different from the Board.
13. Hence, the panel considered the appeals committee as independent in both cases (evaluation and international accreditation) despite the fact that it includes Board members, as the Board was not involved in the report or decision that is being appealed.

### ESG 3.3 – Independence

14. The panel did not specifically look into the formal rules for dismissal of HCERES Board members and was not aware of the conditions under which that would be possible.
15. The panel had the impression this would probably create significant uproar; it seemed to the panel a rather hypothetical scenario that the President could be dismissed by the government.



## EQAR Substantive Change Report

Agency #1	High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education
Agency acronym	Hcéres
Expiry date #1	28/02/2022
Contact #1	Aude BERVILLER
Phone #1	33 (0) 1 55 55 61 63
Email #1	<a href="mailto:aude.berviller@hceres.fr">aude.berviller@hceres.fr</a>
Other organisations?	No
A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed?	Yes
Description	<p>The French High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres) became an Independent Public Authority, with a legal personality, on 1st January 2022. This evolution has increased the institution's autonomy and given Hcéres greater responsibility from budget preparation to budget closure and has allowed it to develop an analytical approach to the costs of evaluation.</p> <p>The Research Programming Law (LPR), in December 2020, extends the scope of Hcéres to include major research infrastructures and empowers Hcéres to coordinate the activities of the national evaluation bodies.</p>
B. Has the organisational structure changed?	Yes
Description	The new Department of Evaluation of Research

Bodies (DEO) was created following the reorganization of the former Departments of Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions (DEE) and Territorial Coordinations (DECT). Now, the evaluation of research bodies has been handled by the DEO, which is also in charge of the evaluation of major national research infrastructures and their relations with Universities and schools, while the DEE handles the evaluations of universities and schools within a unified framework.

Furthermore, the Hcéres now receives a global subsidy, the use of which is defined by the Board through a formal budget vote. Hcéres has its own deposit account at the Treasury. An accounting agency was created at the same time. In addition, the Hcéres has become a full-fledged employer.

<b>C. Changes in EQA activities</b>	2. Substantive changes carried out to one or several existing external QA activities (e.g. changes to their methodology, criteria or procedures)
<b>Description new/changed</b>	<p>The new evaluation standards (<a href="https://www.hceres.fr/fr/referentiels-devaluation">https://www.hceres.fr/fr/referentiels-devaluation</a>) were revised and approved by the Hcéres Board in October and November 2021.</p> <p>They are still being translated into English*.</p> <p>*Pdf C_New_evaluations_standards_Work_in_progress uploaded at the end of the form.</p> <p>Changes are made to reduce the requirements for the entities being evaluated and to simplify the data collection procedures.</p>

The evaluation standards have been developed to meet a requirement of simplification, efficiency, promotion of scientific integrity and usefulness to the entities evaluated. As part of a continuous improvement process, a new version is being developed for 2023-2024. It will be presented to the Hcéres College on September 19, 2022.

---

## ESG 2.1

The Hcéres ensured that the ESG 1.1 to 1.10 were effectively respected in the new evaluation standards (uploaded at the end of the form\*) by relying on concordance tables.

\*Pdf\_ESG\_2\_1\_Evaluation\_Standards\_DEI uploaded at the end of the form.

---

## ESG 2.2

Starting with the 2022 evaluation campaign, Hcéres' methodology has evolved to involve stakeholders more in the evaluation process. Before the launch of each evaluation campaign, it invites all stakeholders in the evaluation of higher education and research to gather their expectations regarding the processes and criteria, as well as their opinions on the changes proposed by Hcéres.

In addition, discussions with the evaluated entities are held at an early stage, before the procedure is launched, in order to identify their specificities and to gather their expectations regarding the evaluation.

---

## ESG 2.3

---

1

<https://www.hceres.fr/fr/referentiels-devaluation>

2

[https://www.hceres.fr/sites/default/files/media/files/7b\\_referentiel-devaluation-des-etablissements-denseignement-superieur-](https://www.hceres.fr/sites/default/files/media/files/7b_referentiel-devaluation-des-etablissements-denseignement-superieur-)

---

---

**ESG 2.4**

The status and missions of experts and scientific advisors, as well as the constitution of evaluation panels and the rules of ethics, remain identical.

However, in order to ensure the transparency of the constitution of its pool of experts and its renewal, Hcéres has set up an open call for applications. The procedure for the call for applications has been formalized by the Board of January 31, 2022 and February 16, 2022. (see document downloaded at the end of the form\*

\*Pdf\_ESG\_2\_4\_Conditions\_nomination\_experts\_college\_2022\_02\_16).

A work has also been undertaken to increase the remuneration of experts in order to meet a twofold objective: on the one hand, to clarify the content of evaluation missions and to harmonize practices, and on the other hand, to recognize the importance of valuing the evaluation of large institutions, as well as evaluation at the international level. A discussion, opened in the spring of 2022, is still going on with the Ministries concerned so that the compensation scale for experts, set by the decree and the order of September 15, 2015, can be revised.

---

**ESG 2.5**

The evaluations are still collegial and organized by a panel of peers under the authority of a president chosen from among its members.

Each evaluation is conducted in a collegial manner by peers. Based on a prior self-evaluation, it is adversarial since the evaluated entities can report possible dysfunctions and respond to the evaluation report.

---

In the context of international evaluations, Hcéres takes particular care to ensure that the panels are familiar with training and research issues not only at the international level but also at the local level (depending on the country concerned). Thus, it is planned that the recruitment of scientific advisors to the Europe and International Department (DEI) will be carried out by geographical area.

## ESG 2.6

1	<a href="https://www.hceres.fr/fr/rechercher-une-publication?key=&amp;f%5B0%5D=themes_publications%3A43">https://www.hceres.fr/fr/rechercher-une-publication?key=&amp;f%5B0%5D=themes_publications%3A43</a>
---	---

D. Activity outside the scope of the ESG	No
--	----

File #1	<a href="#">C_New_evaluations_standards_Work_in_progress.pdf (1.13 MB)</a>
---------	--

File #2	<a href="#">Pdf_ESG_2_1_Evaluation_Standards_DEI.pdf (1.58 MB)</a>
---------	--

File #3	<a href="#">Pdf_ESG_2_4_Conditions_nomination_experts_college_2022_02_16.pdf (370 KB)</a>
---------	---

Submit form?	I am ready to submit the change report form
--------------	---