

Decision on the Substantive Change Report by Agence pour l'Evaluation de la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur (AEQES)

Register Committee

Ref. RC/C145

Ver. 1.0

Date 2025-09-02

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| Decision of: | 2025-08-28 |
| Result: | Take note |
| Report received on: | 2025-06-27 |
| Agency registered since: | 2011-06-01 |
| Last external review report: | 2022-04-27 |
| Registration until: | 2027-04-30 |
| Absented themselves from decision-making: | Geneviève Le Fort |
| Attachments: | 1. Substantive Change Report, 2025-06-27 |

1. The Register Committee considered the Substantive Change Report of 2025-06-27.
2. The Register Committee learned from the substantive change report that in 2024, AEQES introduced a new set of standards for their *Institutional Review*. These standards were introduced to replace the use of ESG Part 1 in its original form for evaluations with AEQES' own standards. The new standards were adopted in June 2025 and will be applied in reviews starting in 2026.
3. Based on the information provided on the *Institutional Review*, the Register Committee had no prima facie concerns that the ESG are complied.
4. **The Committee, however, expects that this activity will be analysed in full as part of AEQES' next renewal of registration, when the new standards are already in use. This includes whether the revised standards cover all aspects of ESG Part 1 in practice (ESG2.1) and are consistently implemented (ESG 2.5).**

EQAR Substantive Change Report

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| Agency #1 | Agence pour l'évaluation de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur (AEQES) |
| Agency acronym | AEQES |
| Expiry date #1 | 30/04/2027 |
| Contact #1 | Eva Jaroszewski |
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| Other organisations? | No |
| A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed? | No |
| B. Has the organisational structure changed? | No |
| C. Changes in EQA activities | 2. Substantive changes carried out to one or several existing external QA activities (e.g. changes to their methodology, criteria or procedures) |
| Description new/changed | <p>AEQES has been conducting institutional reviews since 2019: initially through a pilot phase (2019-2023), then on a regular basis (since 2023).</p> <p>Until 2025, the standards used to conduct these institutional reviews were Part I of the ESG. In 2024, AEQES developed its own set of standards for institutional review. It were adopted by its Steering Committee in November 2024 and then officially adopted by the Government of the WBF (Wallonia-Brussels Federation) in June 2025.</p> <p>It will apply to institutional reviews conducted from 2026-2027 onwards.</p> |
| 2. Changed EQA activity | |
| 1 | Institutional review |

ESG 2.1

The working group responsible for designing the draft set of standards used the ESG throughout its development work. A cross-reference table showing the mutual coverage of the ESG and the AEQES standards has been drawn up to demonstrate their correspondence (see attachment).

ESG 2.2

The set of standards was developed by the AEQES' "Methodology and Standards Working Group" (which includes stakeholders from outside and inside AEQES governing bodies). It was then reviewed, amended and validated by AEQES' Steering Committee (which includes representatives of institutions, students, teaching and administrative staff in higher education, and representatives of the socio-professional environment).

The design of the standards was based in particular on:

- the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) ;
 - the conclusions of the pilot phase of institutional reviews, which enabled the institutional review methodology to be tested between 2019 and 2023 with 17 voluntary institutions. These conclusions drew up a series of recommendations to be taken into account in the development of the set of standards for institutional review.
 - an in-depth documentation (benchmarking of standards used in other countries of the EHEA),
 - a detailed analysis of the regulatory framework in the WBF, which provides, in addition to external quality assurance mechanisms, various processes to assure the quality of higher education.
- In addition, an official consultation was initiated before the standards were adopted in the form of
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a government decree. The bodies officially consulted were: higher education institutions (through their representative platform, the Academy of Research and Higher Education) and students (through the Federation of French-speaking Students, the only representative body for students in the WBF). Both bodies issued a favourable opinion on the proposal.

ESG 2.3

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| 1 | https://aeqes.be/documents/AEQES%20-%20Institutional%20Reference%20Framework.pdf |
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| 2 | https://aeqes.be/documents/20250625GuideEI2026-2027-final.pdf |
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ESG 2.4

Same as before

ESG 2.5

- Several information sessions organised for institutions (three per year), aimed at promoting a good understanding of the methodology and standards;
- An annual training seminar for experts (duration: from 1.5 and 2 days), mainly on aspects related to the review methodology and standards;
- Support for all review procedures by a member of AEQES staff. The role of this staff member is to support the experts' panel and ensure that the standards are applied consistently and systematically across the procedures.

In addition, AEQES has adopted a “diagnostic tool”. The purpose of this tool is to equip the experts who carry out the external review and to encourage a consistent, substantiated and coherent use of the standards.

It covers five parameters to be analysed for each criterion of the standards:

- Reflexivity and enhancement
 - Systematicity
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- Completeness
- Stakeholders' engagement
- Institutionalisation

For each of the parameters, this diagnostic tool sets out the level of development of quality management systems:

- Absent or emerging
- Under development
- Consolidated
- Fully integrated

In its review report, for each criterion of the set of standards, the experts' panel describes and analyses the practices observed and makes recommendations. The expert panel furthers its analysis by using the diagnostic tool to conclude on each criterion.

AEQES communicated this tool to institutions and experts via the "guide for institutional review" available on its website (French version attached pp.12-14+37-38, English translation in progress).

ESG 2.6

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| 1 | Same as before |
| D. Activity outside the scope of the ESG | No |
| File #1 | Mapping_grid_ESG_-_AEQES_set_of_standards_for_institutional_review.pdf (170 KB) |
| File #2 | 20250625GuideEI2026-2027-final_.pdf (4.65 MB) |
| Submit form? | I am ready to submit the change report form |
