

Approval of the Application
by the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (AEQES)
for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register

Register Committee

Ref. RC19/A33

Ver. 1.0

Date 2017-06-23

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Application of:	18/12/2015
Agency registered since:	03/12/2012
External review report of:	13/02/2017
Review coordinated by:	ENQA
Review panel members:	Norma Ryan (Chair), Oana Sarbu (Secretary), Jean-Pierre Finance (academic), Rok Primožič (student) / Agnė Grajauskienė (ENQA coordinator)
Decision of:	20 June 2017
Registration until:	28 February 2022
Absented themselves from decision-making:	Lucien Bollaert, Freddy Coignoul, Noël Vercruysse (observer)
Attachments:	1. Confirmation of eligibility, 25/01/2016 2. External Review Report, 13/02/2017

1. The application of 18/12/2015 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 25/01/2016.
3. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 13/02/2017 on the compliance of AEQES with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).

Analysis:

4. The Register Committee found that the report provides sufficient evidence and analysis on AEQES' level of compliance with the ESG.
5. With regard to the specific European Standards and Guidelines, the Register Committee considered the following:

ESG 2.2 – Designing methodologies fit for purpose

The review report demonstrated that, based on the national legislation as the main framework, AEQES has developed its own methodological framework, procedures and criteria in consultation with the key stakeholders.

The Register Committee therefore considered that the flag of the Committee's decision in 2011 has been addressed; it concurred with the review panel's conclusion that AEQES complies with the standard.

Register Committee

ESG 2.3 – Implementing processes

The Register Committee noted that AEQES has acted on the recommendations made in the 2011 review and adopted reinforced follow-up procedures in 2015.

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The Register Committee thus considered that the corresponding flag has been addressed and concurred with the review panel's conclusion that AEQES complies with the standard.

ESG 2.4 – Peer-review experts

The review panel confirmed that students are now engaged in all AEQES evaluation panels, as full members of the panels, except for follow-up evaluations.

While considering that the corresponding flag has been addressed and thus concurring with the review panel's conclusion, the Register Committee underlined the review panel's recommendation that AEQES would benefit from also involving students in the follow-up evaluation process and panels.

ESG 3.3 – Independence

The review panel was satisfied that the 2014 decree on AEQES and the current organisational status and structure sufficiently demonstrate and safeguard AEQES independence. In particular, AEQES gained the ability to hire staff from its own budget, independently of the Ministry.

The Register Committee therefore considered that the flag from 2011 has been addressed and concurred with the review panel's conclusion that AEQES complies with the standard.

ESG 3.5 – Resources

Apart from the greater autonomy in staff appointments that AEQES gained, the financial resources available to the agency have not changed since 2012. The review panel noted that an increase is not foreseeable in the near future and that AEQES might face a negative financial balance in 2020.

The Register Committee therefore considered that the corresponding flag has only been partially addressed and concurred with the review panel that AEQES only partially complies with the standard.

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

Conclusion:

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

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

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8. The Register Committee considered that AEQES only achieved partial compliance with standard 3.5. In its holistic judgement, the Register Committee concluded that this is specific and limited issue, but that AEQES complies substantially with the ESG as a whole.
9. The Register Committee therefore approved the application for inclusion on the Register. AEQES' inclusion shall be valid until 28/02/2022¹.
10. The Register Committee further underlined that AEQES is expected to address the issue of resources appropriately and to resolve it at the earliest opportunity, as well as to inform EQAR through Substantive Change Reports where required.

¹ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

Agence pour l'évaluation de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur
(AEQES)
Ms Caty Duykaerts
44 Bld Léopold II

**1080 Brussels
Belgium**

Brussels, 25 January 2016

Confirmation of Eligibility: Application for Renewal of Registration
Application no. A33 of 08/01/2016

Dear Caty,

We hereby confirm that the application by AEQES for renewal of registration is eligible.

Based on the information and draft terms of reference provided, the external review coordinated by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) fulfils the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

We confirm that the following activities of AEQES are within the scope of the ESG:

- **External evaluations of programmes (including follow-up evaluations)**

We further remind you that the following issues were flagged when AEQES' registration was last renewed, and should be addressed in your self-evaluation report and the external review report:¹

ESG 2.2: Development of quality assurance processes

The entire process of developing and implementing the new Reference Framework should be addressed in a comprehensive manner, to analyse whether AEQES has been empowered to develop its own quality assurance criteria, in consultation with higher education institutions and stakeholders.

ESG 2.3: Follow-up procedures (ESG 2005 standard ESG 2.5)

¹ While the Register Committee took note of the issues addressed in the Substantive Change Report of AEQES (of 25/05/2015) the flags should nevertheless be addressed in AEQES' self-evaluation report, in the light of the changes made.

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Issues related to the systematic implementation and further development of AEQES follow-up procedures towards becoming a fully embedded feature of AEQES' procedures should be addressed.

ESG 3.5: Resources (ESG 2005 standard ESG 3.4)

It should be addressed whether AEQES has been equipped with sufficient resources to enable it to discharge its core activities fully and to extend its activities in terms of training, workshops and good practice sharing and dissemination. In that respect, also issues related to AEQES' autonomy in staff appointments should be addressed.

ESG 3.3: Independence and perceived independence (ESG 2005 standard ESG 3.6)

The implementation of changes to the organisational status and structure of AEQES, in order to underline its independence and to improve the perception by HEIs and stakeholders of its independence, should be addressed.

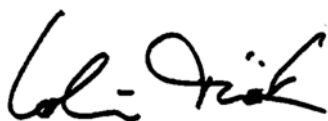
ESG 2.4: Participation of students on panels (ESG 2005 standard ESG 3.7)

It should be addressed whether AEQES has fully implemented its firm commitment to involve students on all evaluation panels.

We kindly ask you to forward this letter to ENQA as the coordinator of the external review and request that AEQES inform the review panel, so as to ensure that all these activities are analysed by the panel.

This confirmation is made according to the relevant provisions of the EQAR Procedures for Applications. AEQES has the right to appeal this decision in accordance with the Appeals Procedure; any appeal must reach EQAR within 90 days from receipt of this decision.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Tück'.

Colin Tück
(Director)

Cc: The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)