

**Approval of the Application
by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE)
for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register**

Register Committee
20 June 2017

Ref. RC19/A37

Ver. 0.1
Date 2016-06-26
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Application of:	18/01/2016
Agency registered since:	25/11/2011
External review report of:	13/02/2017
Review coordinated by:	ENQA
Review panel members:	Jürgen Kohler (Chair, academic), Vanessa Duclos (Secretary), Boris Čurković, Simona Dimovska (student) / Agnė Grajauskienė (ENQA coordinator)
Decision of:	20 June 2017
Registration until:	28 February 2022
Absented themselves from decision-making:	Ana Tecilazić-Goršić (observer)
Attachments:	1. Confirmation of eligibility, 12/02/16 2. External Review Report, 12/02/17

1. The application of 18/01/2016 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 12/02/2016.
3. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 13 February 2017 on the compliance of ASHE 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 ASHE's 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

In its decision to admit ASHE to the Register, the Register Committee had flagged the need to review ASHE's different processes with a view to avoiding duplication.

The Register Committee noted that the review panel remained concerned about different ASHE processes addressing the same or very similar issues. Moreover, the panel appeared to be concerned that the new processes for re-accreditation of doctoral programmes and the possible future processes related to the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) might even lead to further duplication.

The Register Committee therefore concluded that the flag was not addressed and remains a matter deserving the urgent attention of both ASHE and the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, being responsible for the legal framework of the external quality assurance processes implemented by ASHE.

Given that all processes deployed by ASHE in themselves are fit for purpose and were developed in line with the standard, while the overlap and duplication identified by the panel is primarily the result of the typology of external quality assurance processes prescribed by law, the Register Committee was nevertheless able to concur with the panel's conclusion that ASHE complies with the standard.

ESG 2.5 – Criteria for outcomes

The review panel identified that some policies that affect ASHE's decision-making are not fully transparent and known by the stakeholders concerned. The panel further referred to some inconsistency in the application of ASHE's criteria and an insufficiency of the reference documents that panels use to interpret the criteria.

The Register Committee therefore concurred with the conclusion that ASHE only partially complies with the standard.

ESG 2.6 – Reporting

In its decision to admit ASHE to the Register, the Register Committee had flagged the accessibility and readability of ASHE reports. The Committee noted that ASHE took several steps to enhance the accessibility and readability of its report during the past five years, including the publication of summary reports. **The Register Committee therefore concluded that the flag has been addressed.**

The review panel noted that reports of initial accreditation procedures are not published. The review panel considered that these reports “serve as a base for the ministerial decision to admit the HEI or programme to be established and that therefore these reports do not carry information directly addressed to the general public” (report p. 40) and that in case of a negative decision “the HEI or programme concerned will not be

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launched and so there is no tangible public interest in reading these reports” (idem).

The Register Committee, however, considered that the standard clearly requires the publication of all external quality assurance reports. Even if the reports' addressee is the ministry, there is a clear public interest in the basis of ministerial decisions being public and transparent.

The Register Committee therefore concluded that ASHE only partially complies with the standard.

ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals

The panel considered that the body deciding on appeals should not be identical to the body that made the decision being appealed, but identified an overlap in the case of ASHE. It further noted that there is no appeals procedure (internal to ASHE) for initial accreditation, but only a possibility to appeal decisions in a court.

The Register Committee concurred with the conclusion that ASHE 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 ASHE demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) as follows:

Standard	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.2	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.3	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.4	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.5	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
2.6	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance
2.7	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.1	Full compliance	Compliance
3.2	Full compliance	Compliance
3.3	Full compliance	Compliance
3.4	Full compliance	Compliance
3.5	Full compliance	Compliance

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3.6	Full compliance	Compliance
3.7	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

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8. The Register Committee considered that ASHE only achieved partial compliance with some standards. In its holistic judgement, the Register Committee concluded that these are specific and limited issues, but that ASHE complies substantially with the ESG as a whole.
9. The Register Committee therefore approved the application for inclusion on the Register. ASHE's inclusion shall be valid until 28/02/2022¹.
10. The Register Committee further underlined that ASHE is expected to address the issues mentioned appropriately and to resolve them at the earliest opportunity.

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

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Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE)

Jasmina Havranek, Director

Donje Svetice 38

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CROATIA

Brussels, 12 February 2016

Confirmation of Eligibility: Application for Renewal of Registration

Application no. A37 of 18/01/2016

Dear Ms Havranek,

We hereby confirm that the application by ASHE 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 ASHE are within the scope of the ESG:

- Initial accreditation (of higher education institutions and programmes in all three cycles);
- Reaccreditation (of higher education institutions and programmes in all three cycles);
- Audit (of higher education institutions);

Please ensure that ASHE's self-evaluation report covers all the aforementioned activities carried out in Croatia or abroad.

In the application form, ASHE stated that it did not consider the activity "*thematic evaluations*" to be within the scope of the ESG. We considered the information provided and came to the conclusion that this activity might be within the scope of the ESG as far as such evaluations are used as a basis for a reaccreditation procedure. Since it cannot be ultimately decided based on the information available to what extent thematic evaluations are within the scope of the ESG, ASHE's self-evaluation report and the external panel's report should further elaborate on this matter.

ASHE further stated that it did not consider the activity "*evaluations in science*" to be within the scope of the ESG. These evaluations might be within the scope of the ESG as far as they include reviews or assessments of doctoral study programmes and thus related to learning and teaching

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in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation. ASHE's self-evaluation report and the external review report should address whether this is the case.

Furthermore, the self-evaluation report and external review report should also address how ASHE ensures that decisions on basis of reviews carried out by other agencies are in line with the ESG, especially in case the other agency is not registered on EQAR.

We also remind you that the following issues were flagged when ASHE was admitted to the Register and should be addressed in your self-evaluation report and the external review report:

ESG 2.1 & 2.2 Possible duplication in ASHE's procedures [ESG 2005: standard 2.1 & 2.4]

It should receive attention whether ASHE has analysed and reviewed its different external quality assurance processes (re-accreditation, evaluation and audit) with a view to avoiding unnecessary duplication or overlap between these processes.

ESG 2.6: Accessibility and readability of reports [ESG 2005: standard 2.5]

It should receive attention what measures ASHE has taken to ensure the accessibility and readability of its reports.

We confirm that the following activities are not within the scope of the ESG:

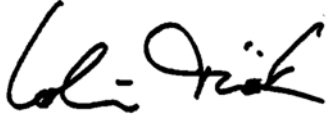
- Professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications;
- Data collection and analysis, as far as the activity is separate from thematic evaluations;
- Admissions to higher education institutions in Croatia;
- Support to national bodies;

While these activities are not relevant to your application, it is ASHE's choice – in agreement with the review coordinator – whether those activities should be commented upon by the review panel.

We kindly ask you to forward this letter to ENQA as the coordinator of the external review and request that ENQA 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. ASHE 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,



Colin Tück
(Director)

Cc: ENQA