

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

Register Committee
 11-12 December 2023

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Ver. 1.0
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Application of:	2022-09-30		
Agency registered since:	2009-03-01		
Type of review:	Targeted	Site visit:	2023-03-31
External review report of:	2023-09-20	Submitted:	2023-09-29
Review coordinated by:	European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)		
Review panel members:	Ana Gvritishvili, Bryan Maguire, Caty Duykaerts, Terhi Nokkala		
Decision of:	2023-12-12		
Registration until:	2028-09-30		
Absented themselves from decision-making:	none		
Attachments:	1. External Review Report, 2023-09-20 (external document)		

1. The application of 2022-09-30 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 2022-10-25.
3. The Register Committee considered the targeted external review report of 2023-09-20 on the compliance of ARACIS with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).

Analysis:

4. In considering ARACIS's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account.

- *Programme Authorisation (First Cycle)*
- *Programme Accreditation (First Cycle)*
- *Programme Accreditation and awarding of EUR-ACE Label (First Cycle)*
- *Programme Accreditation (Second Cycle)*

- *Study domain Accreditation (Second Cycle)*
- *Study domain accreditation (Third Cycle)*
- *Evaluation of institutions organising doctoral study programs (IOSUD)*
- *Institutional Evaluation*
- *Joint programme evaluations*

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

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

ESG 2.6 – Reporting

7. The Register Committee noted from the panel's analysis that the central part of the agency's reports appears to be merely a check list "occasionally lacking depth of analysis and evidence-based material". The panel further raised concerns with regards to the accessibility of reports on the ARACIS website, which the panel found somewhat challenging to navigate.

8. The Committee further noted that in the case of *doctoral study programmes, study domain accreditation* and *study domain authorisation* ARACIS does not publish the experts' final proposals for decision. The Committee does not understand why the final proposal for decision/expert conclusion is left out, in particular since this is included in all other external quality assurance activities of ARACIS. The Register Committee underlined that this approach affects the transparency of the agency's decision making processes in the case of third cycle reviews.

9. The Committee also found that for some of its external QA activities the agency had changed its approach from publishing the full expert report to only publishing a short excerpt of the expert report i.e., the second cycle study domain accreditation reports only include up to a one page excerpt from the expert review report. The Register Committee underlined that it can be of public interest to know the basis on which the final reports are being developed, and that the publication (at least as annex) of the full reports is important to ensure the transparency in the decision-making of the Council.

10. Based on the above raised concerns, the Register Committee could not follow the panel's conclusion of compliance and therefore concluded that ARACIS complies only partially with ESG 2.6.

ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals

11. In its past decision, the Register Committee raised a concern regarding the lack of transparency in the agency's processes concerning the members nominated to act in the Appeals Committee. The Committee also noted at

that time that the appeals procedure was not easily accessible on ARACIS's website.

12. The Register Committee noted from the analysis of the panel that ARACIS has appointed a Permanent Appeals Commission for a four-year term and published the composition of the commission. The Committee also learned that as of October 2022, ARACIS has a new, integrated and simplified Appeals and Complaints procedure that can be easily retrieved from the website¹.

13. The Committee welcomed the newly updated procedure, and while noting that the procedure is rather generic in what concerns handling of complains, that it satisfies the requirements of the standard.

14. The Committee therefore concurred with the panel's conclusion that ARACIS is compliant with standard 2.7.

3.6 – Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

15. In its past decision the Register Committee found that the internal quality assurance (IQA) system had not been implemented at that time. In particular it found that the IQA had yet to prove its role in supporting the internal activity of its speciality commissions and in providing the agency with a sound basis for reviewing and improving the effectiveness with which it works.

16. The Register Committee noted from the detailed analysis of the review report that ARACIS has set up a functional internal QA system including relevant documentation, structures and personnel. **Having considered the evidence presented, the Committee can follow the panel's conclusion that ARACIS now complies with the requirements of standard 3.6.**

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

Conclusion:

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

Standard	Previous decision (2019-04-04)	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

¹<https://www.aracis.ro/en/procedure-appeals-and-complaints/>

2.6	Compliance	Compliance	Partial compliance
2.7	Partial compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.1	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.2	Compliance	Full compliance	Compliance
3.3	Compliance	Full compliance	Compliance
3.4	Compliance	Full compliance	Compliance
3.5	Compliance	Substantial compliance	Compliance
3.6	Partial compliance	Compliance	Compliance
3.7	Compliance	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

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19. The Register Committee considered that ARACIS only achieved partial compliance with one standards. However, in its holistic judgement, the Register Committee concluded that these are specific and limited issues, and that ARACIS continues to comply substantially with the ESG as a whole.

20. The Register Committee therefore renewed ARACIS's inclusion on the Register. ARACIS's renewed inclusion shall be valid until 2028-09-30².

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

² Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §3.25 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.