

Approval of the Application
by Agency for Quality of the Basque University System
(Unibasq)
for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register

Register Committee

3-4 April 2024

Ref. RC43/A143

Ver. 1.0

Date 2024-04-04

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| Application of: | 2023-02-24 | | |
| Agency registered since: | 2014-04-01 | | |
| Type of review: | Targeted | Site visit: | 2024-10-03 |
| External review report of: | 2024-01-10 | Submitted: | 2024-02-06 |
| Review coordinated by: | European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA) | | |
| Review panel members: | Achim Hopbach, Adrian Korzeniowski, Ieva Vaiciukevičienė, Maria Del Mar Campins Eritja | | |
| Decision of: | 2024-04-04 | | |
| Registration until: | 2029-01-31 | | |
| Absented themselves from decision-making: | n/a | | |
| Attachments: | 1. External Review Report (external link), 2024-01-10 2. Minutes of a clarification call (2023-03-01) | | |

1. The application of 2023-02-24 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 2023-04-19 having considered clarification received from Unibasq on 2023-03-01.
3. The Register Committee considered the targeted external review report of 2024-01-10 on the compliance of Unibasq with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).

Analysis:

4. In considering Unibasq's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account the following activities:

At programme level

- *Programme ex-ante accreditation and authorisation in the Basque University System*
- *Review of study programme modifications*
- *Accreditation renewal of study programmes*
 - *in the Basque University System*
 - *outside the Basque University System*
 - *of joint study programmes*
- *Follow-up of study programmes in the Basque University System*
- *Labels*
 - *Dual*
 - *International*
- *CeQulnt Certification*
- *Ex-ante evaluation of master programmes in the arts*
- *Ex-post evaluation of artistic study programmes*
- *European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes*

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At institutional level:

- Institutional Accreditation
- AUDIT (Audits of internal quality assurance systems of faculties, shared programme with ANECA, AQU and ACSUG)
- DOCENTIA

5. The activities *Evaluation of research teams, Evaluation of research activities, Review of applications for grants by research groups2, Evaluation of university research institutes, Technical reports on institutional agreements, Evaluation of academic staff and Reports for non-accredited study programmes (UPV/EHU) - Títulos propios* are not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to the application inclusion on the Register.

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

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

ESG 2.6 – Reporting

8. In its previous decision for renewal of registration on EQAR (of 11-05-2019), Unibasq was found to be partially compliant with the standard as it did not publish reports of its ex-ante accreditation resulting with a negative outcome. From the report, the Register Committee learned that the agency now publishes these reports too.

9. The Register Committee further learned that the preliminary and final review reports shared with the higher education institutions and the public do not include the expert panel reports; these reports are only available to the Unibasq's Committees.

10. The Register Committee found that the agency addressed the concerns raised in its earlier decision regarding the publication of negative reports from its ex ante accreditation procedure. It, however, shared the panel's concerns that the agency does not fully comply with this standard because of the lack of transparency regarding the expert panel reports.

11. The Register Committee therefore concurred with the panel's conclusion and found that the agency remains partially compliant with the standard.

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ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals

12. In its previous decision for renewal of registration on EQAR (of 11-05-2019), Unibasq was found to be partially compliant with the standard due to the unclear procedure for handling complaints. From the report, the Committee learned that Unibasq now has a well established complaints procedure noted in the agency's regulations of the Ethics and Guarantees Committee and the Code of Ethics.

13. Following the changes made by the agency, the Committee was able to follow the panel's conclusion that the agency complies with the standard.

ESG 3.1 – Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

14. In its previous decision for renewal of registration on EQAR (of 11-05-2019), Unibasq was found to be partially compliant with the standard as it did not make a clear distinction between its ESG aligned and consultancy activities (i.e. the evaluation of "títulos propios"). At the time, the agency removed the information regarding the evaluation of "títulos propios" from its website; the Committee, however, could not verify whether the new method of communication brought clarity for all stakeholders.

15. From the external review report, the Committee has learned that the agency "*has made...efforts to request from higher education institutions [involved in the consultancy activities] not to use misleading information on their websites and has succeeded as far as the panel could determine through an internet search*".

16. The Committee therefore followed the panel's conclusion and found that the agency now complies with the standard. The Committee, however, shared the panel's view that the agency could improve the distinction between these two group of activities by creating a separate section on its website where it showcases clear information to the public.

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 Unibasq demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) as follows:

Register Committee

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| Standard | Previous decision (2019-11-05) | 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 |
| 2.6 | Partial compliance | Partial compliance | Partial compliance |
| 2.7 | Partial compliance | Compliance | Compliance |
| 3.1 | Partial compliance | Compliance | Compliance |
| 3.2 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.3 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.4 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.5 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.6 | Compliance | <i>Inherited</i> | <i>Inherited</i> |
| 3.7 | Compliance | (not expected) | Compliance (by virtue of applying) |

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19. **The Register Committee considered that Unibasq only achieved partial compliance with one standard. In its holistic judgement, the Register Committee concluded that this is a specific and limited issue, but that Unibasq continues to comply substantially with the ESG as a whole.**

20. **The Register Committee therefore renewed Unibasq's inclusion on the Register. Unibasq's renewed inclusion) shall be valid until 2029-01-31¹.**

21. The Register Committee further underlined that Unibasq 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 §3.25 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

Application by Agency for Quality of the Basque University System (Unibasq) for Renewal of Registration

Minutes of Telephone Conversation

Register Committee

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|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Date of the conversation: | 01/03/2023 |
| Representative of Unibasq: | Eva Fernandez |
| Representative of EQAR: | Melinda Szabó, Blazhe Todorovski |

1. Unibasq has submitted on 2023-02-24 an application for renewal of registration on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).
2. In order to prepare the deliberations of the Register Committee on the eligibility of the application and Unibasq's activities within the scope of the ESG, EQAR contacted Unibasq via telephone to clarify the matters below.
3. Unibasq agreed to clarify the matters) by means of a Zoom conversation.
4. Unibasq developed a number of protocols for awarding labels as part of its ex-ante and ex-post accreditations. The awarded labels concern work based learning in a company (*Dual label*) and an *internationalisation label*. The agency clarified that the activities do not differ in procedures from its accreditation activities but are integrated in the phases of programme review.
5. The agency clarified that the activity *ex-post artistic study programmes*, follows the activity ex-ante evaluation of master programmes in the arts. Both activities only address master study programmes of academies of music schools, ballet theatre etc. The ex-post activity was developed following the criteria and procedure as for the ex-ante procedure, that has been covered as part of the last renewal of the agency.
6. The activity *institutional agreements* is a technical evaluation carried out on a yearly basis by Unibasq. The focus of the assessment is the assessment of specific objectives set by the Basque Government Department responsible for universities for a four year period. The activity may touch upon teaching and learning but the goals (objective to reach in a specific activity) are different, as the starting point in each university might be different.
7. The *evaluation of university research institutes* is an external QA activity carried out by Unibasq to determine the capacity of the institute to

organise research. The research institutes may be constituted by one or more universities, or by universities jointly with other public or private entities through agreements or other forms of cooperation. University research institutes can organise and develop doctoral and postgraduate programmes and studies according to the procedures established in their Statutes. The agency explained that the external QA activity does not concern aspects of the teaching and learning of study programmes, nor the award of Phd programmes but focuses on the research institutes' scientific, technical or artistic interest and capacity. Given the size of the Basque higher education system, this external QA activity is rarely employed i.e. Unibasq was only once requested to initiate such a review since its operation.

8. Unibasq agreed to submit a substantive change report with further information for all the above mentioned activities to ensure the update of its terms of reference and coverage of all corresponding external QA activities in its next external review against the ESG.

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