



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

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Brussels, 29 September 2023

Subject: Statement on validation of the external review report of RCVS

Dear Ms. Lizzie Lockett,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting on 20 September 2023, the ENQA Agency Review Committee validated the external review report of RCVS. The committee concluded that the report has been produced in accordance with the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews and can thus be used to apply for ENQA membership, as well as for any other purposes. This is in line with article 26, paragraph 2 of ENQA's Rules of Procedure, which states that the review report can be further used only once this statement of validation has been issued. The purpose of this statement is to set out the committee's views on the quality of the final report and consistency of the panel's evaluation on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The committee examined the provided review report and asked the panel for minor revisions on the following standards: ESG 3.1, ESG 3.4, ESG 2.1, ESG 2.3, ESG 2.4, and ESG 2.5.

On the ESG 3.1 Activities, policies and procedures for quality assurance, the committee found the proposed suggestion not to be self-standing and thus required some additional elaboration on how students should be further engaged with the agency.

Regarding ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis, the committee asked the panel to consider revising the listed recommendation as to better emphasise what are the agency's remaining challenges in reaching compliance with the standard.

On ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance, the committee asked the panel to clearly list two of the agency's external QA activities in the introduction to the report. In this regard, the current statement on page 5 of the report should be carefully reconsidered, i.e., "Once the first cohort reaches their final year of studies, the schools will undergo their final full accreditation, and until this time, these

schools have six-monthly meetings with the RCVS and an interim visitation in their third year". The statement namely implies that the agency also conducts the institutional-level accreditations.

Next, on ESG 2.3 Implementing processes, the committee found the panel's elaboration on the agency's new approach to self-assessment insufficiently elaborated in the review report. Since the standard requires the agencies' external QA processes to include a self-assessment or equivalent, the committee asked for further information on the equivalent aspect of self-assessment of the evaluated study programmes. Additionally, the panel's reflection on the equivalent approach should be further reflected upon.

On ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts, the committee asked the panel to further elaborate on the role and tasks of the agency's staff in the VN accreditations. As the review report reads: "As accreditations in VN are even more focused on the regulatory aspects and compliance, RCVS staff still participate in panels, but generally no longer act as chairs" (p. 51). The statement namely implies a potential conflict of interest due to the agency's involvement in the review procedures as the review panel members, which potentially also undermines the independence of these procedures.

Finally, on ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes, the committee asked the panel to consider revising the suggestion into a recommendation, since the listed suggestion refers to the requirement of the standard.

The committee received the final review report that addressed the additional requirements. The final review report can thus be further used to apply for ENQA membership, as well as for any other purposes, as stipulated above.

This statement will be published on ENQA's website as an annex to the review report.

Thank you for your trust placed in ENQA to conduct this review. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,



Mr. Alastair Delaney
Chair of ENQA Agency Review Committee

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel and further discussed by the committee (where relevant), RCVS is recommended to take appropriate action, in so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis

It is necessary to reflect on the requirements of the standard and clearly differentiate between thematic analyses – which focus on topics relevant for the reviewed programmes as identified by the visitation reports – and analyses focused on improving the review process – which are part of the RCVS internal quality assurance. The panel expects that this would lead to a revision of the existing plan and a critical analysis of the available accreditation reports as well as a discussion of potential topics with the stakeholders, both of which may require additional expertise.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

The agency is recommended to discuss with the VS stakeholders the aims and use of the data submitted in the scope of annual monitoring.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

While recognizing the challenge, the agency is recommended to work towards fully excluding committee and Council members from the expert panels.