External review of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) by ENQA

Annex I:

TRIPARTITE TERMS OF REFERENCE BETWEEN EAEVE, ENQA AND EQAR

December 2021

1. Background and context

The European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) was founded in 1988 and initially based in Maisons-Alfort, France. Later, the administrative office was based in Brussels, Belgium and since 2007, the seat of EAEVE and its offices have been in Vienna, Austria.The vision for EAEVE is to be the official accreditation authority for veterinary education establishments within Europe. The mission of EAEVE is to evaluate, promote and further develop the quality and standard of veterinary medical establishments and their teaching within, but not limited to, the member states of the European Union (EU). The primary objective is to monitor the harmonization of the minimum standards set down in the study programme for veterinary surgeons in European Union Directive 2005/36. This is enacted through the European System of Evaluation of Veterinary Training (ESEVT), which is managed by the EAEVE but with joint responsibility together with the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE). A list of Establishments' status is maintained.

Other objectives are to reinforce cooperation between member establishments and to act as a forum for discussion in order to improve and harmonize veterinary education. Additional tasks are the facilitation of information exchange, staff exchange, student exchange and teaching materials exchange between members.

Members are the faculties, schools and universities involved in teaching and research in veterinary medicine and science. In 2021, out of the 110 Veterinary Educational Establishments (VEEs) existing in Europe, 102 are members of the EAEVE.

The European System of Evaluation of Veterinary Training (ESEVT) is managed by the EAEVE but with joint responsibility together with the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE). The main objective of the ESEVT is to evaluate if the professional qualifications provided by the Veterinary Education Establishments (VEEs) are compliant with the relevant EU Directives and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The ESEVT evaluation process is an accreditation procedure of all EAEVE members as defined by the EAEVE Statutes. In the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), the term 'VEE' (Veterinary Education Establishment) refers to such a member. As stated in the EAEVE Statutes, the ESEVT is based on a compulsory system of Visitations together with periodic Interim Reports provided by the VEE. To be accredited by the ESEVT, a VEE and each study programme it provides leading to the degree of veterinarian must be compliant with the EU Directives on the recognition of professional qualifications and the ESG. If a VEE offers more than one study programme to become a veterinarian, e.g. in different languages or in collaboration with other VEEs, all study programmes must be evaluated.

Four types of evaluation are organised by ESEVT, i.e.:

-) Full Visitation:

To be accredited by ESEVT, a VEE must apply for Full Visitation and must demonstrate that the Establishment and the curriculum it provides meet all the Standards set out in the ESEVT SOP and are compliant with the EU Directives on the recognition of professional qualifications (for veterinarians and other Health professions) and the ESG 2015.

-) Re-visitation:

One year after the previous (full) Visitation at the latest, a VEE that considers that it has rectified its Major Deficiency/ies must ask ECOVE through the EAEVE Office for a Re-visitation.

-) Preliminary Visitation:

The Preliminary Visitation is a prerequisite for granting membership in EAEVE, as stated in the EAEVE Statutes. The Preliminary Visitation is integrated with a (full) Visitation which must be completed within a 3-year period after the completion of the Preliminary Visitation for all candidate VEEs seeking membership of EAEVE. The Preliminary Visitation is dedicated solely to new VEEs in Europe and VEEs from outside Europe, which are not aware of the ESG and the SOP requirements and should benefit from a two-step evaluation.

-) Interim Report:

Three and a half years after the (full) Visitation, all VEEs that are members of EAEVE must send a concise Interim Report to the EAEVE Office.

Upon an official request from the visited VEE, ECOVE may accept to share Visitors with other veterinary accreditation bodies in case of Joint Visitations within the International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG). However, the Visitation programme must be fully compliant with the ESEVT SOP, e.g. specific ESEVT Visitation team, Self-Evaluation Report (SER), Visitation Report, Exit Presentation. Currently, together with other veterinary accreditation bodies of the IAWG, EAEVE is working on the Joint Visitations´ procedure. However, it must be emphasised that the last Joint Visitation was performed in 2018 under the former SOP and there are no Joint Visitations planned by any of our member VEEs in the near future.

EAEVE has been a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2018 and is applying for ENQA renewal of membership.

EAEVE has been registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since 2018 and is applying for the renewal of EQAR registration.

2. Purpose and scope of the review

This review will evaluate the extent to which EAEVE (the agency) complies with each of the standards of Parts 2 and 3 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) and support the agency in its efforts to continually review and enhance its work. Such an external review is a requirement for agencies wishing to apply for ENQA membership and/or for EQAR registration.

2.1 Activities of the agency within the scope of the ESG

To apply for ENQA membership and EQAR registration, this review will analyse all of the agency's activities that fall within the scope of the ESG, e.g., reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditations of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning (and their relevant links to research and innovation). All activities are reviewed irrespective of geographic scope (within or outside the EHEA) or whether they are obligatory or voluntary in nature.

The following activities of EAEVE thus have to be addressed in the external review:

- ESEVT accreditation visitations, including:
  - Full Visitation
  - Re-visitation
  - Preliminary Visitation
  - Interim Report

The self-evaluation report and the external review report are expected to pay specific attention to those issues where the Register Committee concluded in its last decision that the agency complied only partially with the ESG, namely standards 2.1, 2.5 and 2.6 (see last decision). Moreover, the review should pay attention to the matters highlighted in the Register Committee's decisions on EAEVE's Substantive Change Report made since the last review (see https://data.deqar.eu/agency/48/).

The review should also analyse whether ESG compliance is equally assured in the case of Joint Visitations with other agencies (in the context of IAWG), in particular where those agencies are not EQAR-registered.

3. The review process

The review will be conducted following the methodology of ENQA Agency Reviews. The process is designed in line with the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and the requirements of the *EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

The review procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of, and agreement on the Terms of Reference for the review between EAEVE, ENQA and EQAR (including publishing of the Terms of Reference on ENQA's website[1]);
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel by ENQA;
- Notification of EQAR about the appointed panel;

[1] The agency is encouraged to publish the ToR on its website as well.

- Self-assessment by the agency, including the preparation and publication of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit of the agency by the review panel;
- Preparation and completion of the final review report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final review report by ENQA's Agency Review Committee;
- Publication of the final review report;
- A decision from the EQAR Register Committee on the agency's registration on EQAR;
- A decision from the ENQA Board on ENQA membership;
- Follow-up on the panel's recommendations to the agency, including a voluntary progress visit.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review panel

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts (at least one of which is currently employed by an ENQA member agency), an academic employed by a higher education institution, a student member, and potentially a labour market representative (if requested). One of the members serves as the chair of the review panel, and another member as a review secretary. For ENQA Agency Reviews at least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. An additional panel member may be included in the panel at the request of the agency. In this case, an additional fee is charged to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses.

The panel will be supported by the ENQA Review Coordinator (an ENQA staff member) who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA's requirements are met throughout the process. The Review Coordinator will not be the secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide the agency with the proposed panel composition and the curricula vitarum of the panel members to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The reviewers will have to agree to a non-conflict of interest statement that is incorporated in their contract for the review of this agency.

3.2 Self-assessment by the agency, including the preparation of a self-assessment report

The agency is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and must adhere to the following guidance:

- Self-assessment is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;

- The self-assessment report is expected to contain:

    - a brief description of the HE and QA system;

    - the history, profile, and activities of the agency;

    - a presentation of how the agency addresses each individual standard of Parts 2 and 3 of the ESG for each of the agency's external QA activities, with a brief, critical reflection on the presented facts;

    - opinions of stakeholders;

    - the instances of partial compliance noted in the most recent EQAR Register Committee decision of inclusion/renewal and any other aspects that may have been raised by the EQAR Register Committee in subsequent change report decisions (if relevant);

    - reference to the recommendations provided in the previous review and actions taken to meet those recommendations;

    - a SWOT analysis;

    - reflections on the agency's key challenges and areas for future development.

- All the agency's external QA activities (as defined under section 2.1) are described and their compliance with the ESG is analysed in the SAR.

- The report is well-structured, concise, and comprehensive. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which the agency performs its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG.

The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat, which has two weeks to carry out a screening. The purpose of a screening is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but rather whether or not the necessary information, as outlined in the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews*, is present. If the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to ask for a revised version within two weeks.

The final version of the agency's self-assessment report is then submitted to the review panel a minimum of eight weeks prior to the site visit. The agency publishes the completed SAR on its website and sends the link to ENQA. ENQA will publish this link on its website as well.

3.3 A site visit by the review panel

The review panel will draft a proposal of the site visit schedule which must be submitted to the agency at least six weeks before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule is to include

an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is usually 2,5 days. The approved schedule must be given to the agency at least one month before the site visit to properly organise the requested interviews.

In advance of the site visit (ideally at least two weeks before the site visit), the panel will organise an obligatory online meeting with the agency. This meeting is held to ensure that the panel reaches a sufficient understanding of:

- The specific national/legal context in which the agency operates;
- The specific quality assurance system to which the agency belongs;
- The key characteristics of the agency's external QA activities.

The review panel will be assisted by the ENQA Review Coordinator during the site visit. The review coordinator will act as the panel's chief liaison with the agency, monitor the integrity of the review process and its consistency, and ensure that ENQA's overall expectations of the review are considered and met.

The site visit will close with a final debriefing meeting in which the panel outlines its general impressions and provides an overview of the judgement on the agency's ESG compliance. The panel will not comment on whether or not the agency would be granted/reconfirmed membership with ENQA or registration on EQAR.

3.4 Preparation and completion of the final review report

Based on the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will follow the purpose and scope of the review as defined under sections 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for the panel's findings concerning each standard of Parts 2 and 3 of the ESG. When preparing the report, the review panel should also bear in mind *EQAR's Policy on Use and Interpretation of the ESG for the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies*[2] to ensure that the report contains sufficient information for the Register Committee to consider the agency's application for registration on EQAR.

A draft will first be submitted to the ENQA Review Coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity, and language, and it will then be submitted to the agency – usually within 10 weeks of the site visit – for comment on factual accuracy and grave misunderstandings only. The agency will be given two weeks to do this and should not submit any additional material or documentation at this stage. Thereafter, the review panel will take into account the agency's feedback on possible factual errors and finalise and submit the review report to ENQA.

The report should be finalised within three months of the site visit and will normally not exceed 40-50 pages in length.

[2] Available at: https://www.eqar.eu/about/official-documents/#use-and-interpretation-of-the-esg

3.5. Publication of the report and a follow-up process

The agency will receive the review panel's report and publish it on its website once the Agency Review Committee has validated the report. The report will also be published on the ENQA website together with the statement of the Agency Review Committee validating external review reports by assessing the integrity of the review process and checking the quality and consistency of the reports. Importantly, during this process, and prior to final validation of the report, the Agency Review Committee has the option to request additional (documentary) evidence or clarification from the review panel, review coordinator or the agency if needed. The review report will be published on ENQA website regardless of the review outcome.

As part of the review's follow-up activities, the agency commits to react on the review recommendations and submit a follow-up report to ENQA within two years of the validation of the final external review report. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website.

The follow-up report may be complemented by an optional progress visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). The visit, which normally takes place 2-3 years after the verification of the final external review report (and after submission of the follow-up report), aims to offer an enhancement-oriented and strategically driven dialogue that ordinarily might be difficult to truly integrate in the compliance-focused site visit. The progress visit thus does not have the objective of checking the agency's ESG compliance or how the agency has followed up on the recommendations, but rather provides an arena for strategic conversations that allow the agency to reflect on its key challenges, opportunities, and priorities. Should the agency not wish to take advantage of this opportunity, it may opt out by informing the ENQA Review Coordinator about this.

4. Use of the report

ENQA will retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the review panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, will be vested in ENQA.

The report is used as a basis for the Register Committee's decision on the agency's registration on EQAR. In the case of an unsuccessful application to EQAR, the report may also be used by the ENQA Board to reach a conclusion on whether the agency can be admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. The review process is thus designed to serve two purposes. In any case, the review report should only be considered final after validation by the Agency Review Committee. After submission to ENQA but before validation by the ARC, the report may not be used or relied upon by the agency, the panel, or any third party and may not be disclosed without ENQA's prior written consent. The approval of the report is independent of the decision on EQAR registration or ENQA membership.

For the purposes of EQAR registration, the agency will submit the review report (once validated by the Agency Review Committee) to EQAR via email before expiry of the agency's registration on EQAR. The agency should also include its self-assessment report (in a PDF format), a Declaration of Honour, and any other documents that may be relevant for the application (i.e., annexes, statement to the review report, updates). EQAR is expected to consider the review report and the agency's application at its Register Committee meeting

as stipulated in the indicative review schedule below and before the decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board.

To apply for ENQA membership, the agency is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation for applying for membership and the ways in which the agency expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be considered by the Board together with the confirmation of EQAR listing when deciding on the agency's membership. Should the agency not be granted the registration in EQAR or the registration is not renewed, the decision on ENQA membership will be taken based on the final review report, the application letter, and the statement from the Agency Review Committee. The decision on membership will be published on ENQA's website.

5. Indicative schedule of the review

Agreement on Terms of Reference	December 2021
Appointment of review panel members	March 2022
Self-assessment completed	31 May 2022
Screening of SAR by ENQA Review Coordinator	June 2022
Preparation of the site visit schedule and indicative timetable	July 2022
Briefing of review panel members	July 2022
Review panel site visit	September 2022
Draft of review report and its submission to ENQA Review Coordinator for verification of its compliance with the Guidelines	November 2022
Draft of review report to be sent for a factual check to the agency	December 2022
Agency statement on the draft report to the review panel (if necessary)	December 2022
Submission of the final report to ENQA	January 2023
Validation of the review report by the Agency Review Committee	February 2023
Publication of report	February 2023
EQAR Register Committee meeting and initial consideration	March 2023