

External review of the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences (AHPGS) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

**Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

March 2018

**1. Background and Context**

**AHPGS is a German accreditation agency** which was founded in 2001 by representatives of scientific organizations related to the community of nursing, health and social sciences. In the same year, it was also accredited by the German Accreditation Council (GAC). The agency AHPGS e.V. is organised in the legal form of a charitable association (VR 3481). From the beginning, it has been located in Freiburg, Germany. Currently, the association has 37 members, including members of various scientific specialty societies in the area of health and social science, the Assemblies of the Faculties of Social Work and of Therapeutic Pedagogy, the Conference for Deans and Directors in Nursing Sciences and higher education institutions.

A non-profit private limited company under German law (**AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH**) was founded by the AHPGS e.V. at the beginning of 2008 for liability reasons. AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH organises accreditation procedures at Higher Education Institutions on behalf of AHPGS. **AHPGS e.V. is the sole shareholder of the AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH**, which was entered into the Freiburg commercial register on March 5, 2008 with the number HRB 702141.

AHPGS was last accredited in 2014 by the GAC. Thus, AHPGS e.V. is authorised to award the seal of the German Accreditation Council. In 2009, it was first verified that AHPGS conforms to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the criteria for membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The **composition and tasks of the bodies of the AHPGS e.V. are laid down in the agency's by-laws**. The AHPGS e.V. consists of a governing body appointed by the general meeting. The managing director of AHPGS e.V. is Mr. Prof. Dr. Jürgen von Troschke. He was appointed by the general meeting for a five-year period (until 2021). The **responsibilities of the governing body include the appointment of members of the accreditation commissions of the AHPGS e.V.** and the examination of complaints regarding the refusal of accreditation. Unless otherwise provided by the by-laws, the governing body also discusses and decides on any matters concerning the association. The AHPGS e.V. has two accreditation commissions: one commission for programme accreditation procedures and one for system accreditation procedures. The accreditation commissions are the decision-making bodies with regard to all accreditation procedures. **AHPGS e.V. is the applicant of this external review**. The governing body of AHPGS e.V. holds the power of representation, performs the tasks of the shareholder and constitutes the company general meeting of AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH.

In accordance with § 6 of the by-laws, **AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH** has two bodies: the general meeting and the management appointed by the general meeting and notarially certified in 2008. The managing director, Mr. Georg Reschauer, is in charge of the **operational business of AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH**. Thus, AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH concludes contracts with Higher Education Institutions.

Both AHPGS e.V. and AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH are recognised as non-profit organisations for German tax purposes.

The head office of both AHPGS e.V. and AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH, is located in Freiburg, Germany. The head office of the AHPGS e.V. is run by its respective managing director supported by a part-time employee. The managing director as well as all members of the governing body work on a voluntary basis.

Under the direction of the managing director of the AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH, the agency employs at present seven project officers (560 %) and two additional employees (150 %).

AHPGS is one of ten accreditation agencies that are accredited by the German Accreditation Council. As the only accreditation agency, the specific **focus of AHPGS' work is** the external quality assurance **in the area of health and social sciences** through accreditation procedures at program and institutional levels (institutional audits and system accreditation).

In Germany, accreditation procedures and assessments for study programmes as well as institutions are based on the **Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation** (Resolution of the Accreditation Council of December 8, 2009, last amended on February 20, 2013) **until the end of 2017**.

Due to the **reconstruction of the German accreditation system** after the decision of the federal constitutional court which declared the North Rhine Westphalian rules of obligation to accredit to be unconstitutional, it was necessary to develop a legally compliant accreditation system for the future. There is no longer any accreditation of accreditation agencies foreseen by the GAC in this system. Instead, as stipulated in the **sample regulation (KMK decision, December 7, 2017) a registration with the EQAR is required** for reaccreditation purposes. The legal basis and key points of the new German accreditation system, formed on this sample regulation and the **basis of the Treaty Regarding Study Accreditation of June 12, 2017**, have been developed.

However, the concrete embodiment cannot be foreseen at this point in time. Starting with 2018, there are **two accreditation systems in parallel in Germany**: one following the “old law” for contracts drawn up before January 1, 2018, where decisions are taken by the accreditation commission of the respective agency, and another following the “new law” for contracts drawn up after December 31, 2017, where decisions are taken by the German Accreditation council.

AHPGS is **accredited by the German Accreditation Council until 2019** and applied for reaccreditation on October 12, 2017. This application was necessary for the sake of formality. Aside from **requesting an ENQA coordinating review**, thus reconfirming our ENQA membership, AHPGS also seeks to **reapply for registration on EQAR** – as required by law.

In 2016, the **Swiss Accreditation Council authorised AHPGS to conduct procedures of programme accreditation and institutional accreditation** in Switzerland according to Swiss law (“Higher Education Act, HEEdA”).

Since 2015, AHPGS has been **entitled to carry out audits at universities and colleges in Austria** in accordance with § 22 (2) of the Austrian Quality Assurance Act.

Furthermore, the AHPGS conducts its activity alongside various institutions of higher education in Germany and abroad.

Presently, the AHPGS has successfully accredited more than 1,155 national and international study programmes at about 120 higher education institutions.

AHPGS has been an **ENQA member** since 2009 and is applying for renewal of its membership.

AHPGS has been **registered on EQAR** since 2009 and is applying for renewal of registration.

## 2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This review, will evaluate the way in which and to what extent AHPGS fulfils the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether membership of AHPGS should be reconfirmed and to EQAR to support AHPGS application to the register.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting membership.

### 2.1 Activities of AHPGS within the scope of the ESG

In order for AHPGS to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all AHPGS activities that are within the scope of the ESG, i.e. reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning (and their relevant links to research and innovation). This is regardless of whether these activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA, and whether they are obligatory or voluntary.

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

1. Programme accreditation in Germany
2. System accreditation in Germany
3. Institutional audit in Austria\*
4. Programme accreditation in Austria
5. Institutional evaluation in Romania
6. Programme evaluation in Romania
7. Institutional audit in Slovenia\*
8. Institutional accreditation in Switzerland\*\*
9. Other programme accreditations carried out abroad

The review panel should note that “institutional audits” (\*) have not been addressed in the previous external review report of AHPGS and that some activities have not yet been carried out in practice (\*\*). The activities that have not been yet initiated should be considered on the basis of the processes and documentation that would be used in case of a demand for it.

## 3. The Review Process

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in line with the requirements of the *EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-assessment by AHPGS including the preparation of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to AHPGS;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the ENQA Review Committee;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel’s and/or ENQA Board’s recommendations by the agency, including a voluntary follow-up visit.

### 3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts, an academic employed by a higher education institution, student member, and eventually a labour market representative (if requested). One of the members will serve 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 under review. In this case an additional fee to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses is applied.

In addition to the four members, the panel will be supported by the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA expectations are met throughout the process. The ENQA staff member 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 AHPGS with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards AHPGS review.

AHPGS would like to specifically highlight two aspects of part 5.3 of the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews which are not specifically mentioned here: Firstly, at least one member of the panel has good knowledge and understanding of the (old and the new) higher education and quality assurance system in Germany in which the agency (predominantly) operates. Secondly, at least one panel member has fluent knowledge of the main working language (German) of the agency and/or the language of the country in which the agency (predominantly) operates.

### **3.2 Self-assessment by AHPGS, including the preparation of a self-assessment report**

AHPGS is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account 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 broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a brief description of the national HE and QA system; background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis; each criterion (ESG part II and III) addressed individually. All agency's QA activities (whether within their national jurisdiction or outside of it, and whether obligatory or voluntary) will be described and their compliance with the ESG analysed.
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which AHPGS fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG and thus the requirements of ENQA membership.
- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat who has 4 weeks to pre-scrutinise it before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny 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 whether the necessary information, as stated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case 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 reject the report and ask for a revised version within 4 weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 € will be charged to the agency.
- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of six weeks prior to the site visit.

### **3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel**

AHPGS will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes 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 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to AHPGS at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by AHPGS in arriving in Freiburg, Germany.

The site visit will close with a final de-briefing meeting outlining the panel's overall impressions but not its judgement on compliance or granting of ENQA membership.

### **3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report**

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ESG. A draft will be first submitted to the ENQA review coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity and language and it will be then submitted to AHPGS within 11 weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If AHPGS chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by AHPGS, finalise the document and submit it to ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

When preparing the report, the review panel should also bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG*, so as to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR.

AHPGS is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation applying for membership and the ways in which AHPGS expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be discussed along with the final evaluation report.

### **4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report**

AHPGS will consider the expert panel's report and will publish it on its website once the ENQA Board has made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. AHPGS commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting a follow-up report to the ENQA Board. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

The follow-up report will be complemented by a small-scale visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered as of particular importance or challenge by AHPGS. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or compliance of the agency with the ESG. Should the agency not wish to take advantage of this opportunity, it may opt out by informing the ENQA Review Coordinator about this.

### **5. Use of the report**

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

The review report is used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether AHPGS has met the ESG and can be thus admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. The report will also be used for registration on EQAR, and is designed so as to serve these two purposes. However, the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to AHPGS and ENQA and until it is approved by the Board the report may not be used or relied upon by AHPGS, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. AHPGS may use the report at its discretion only after the Board has approved of the report. The approval of the report is independent of the decision on membership.

The Chair of the panel shall remain available to respond to questions of clarification or further information from the EQAR Register Committee provided that the ENQA Secretariat is copied in all such requests.

**6. Budget**

AHPGS shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,500 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,500 EUR
Fee of the 2 other panel members	4,000 EUR (2,000 EUR each)
Fee of 2 panel members for follow-up visit	1,000 EUR (500 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	7,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,400 EUR
Approximate travel and subsistence expenses	6,000 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses follow-up visit	1,600 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR VAT excl. for a review team of 4 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, AHPGS will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to AHPGS if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

The fee of the follow-up visit is included in the overall cost of the review and will not be reimbursed in case the agency does not wish to benefit from it.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

## 7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Agreement on terms of reference	March 2018
Appointment of review panel members	By July 2018
Self-assessment completed	July 2018
Pre-screening of SAR by ENQA coordinator	August 2018
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	September/October 2018
Briefing of review panel members	November 2018
Review panel site visit	Early December 2018
Draft of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA coordinator for pre-screening	Late January 2019
Draft of evaluation report to AHPGS	February 2019
Statement of AHPGS to review panel if necessary	Early March 2019
Submission of final report to ENQA	By Mid-March 2019
Consideration of the report by ENQA Board and response of AHPGS	April 2019 (depending on the date of the ENQA Board meeting)
Publication of the report	April/May 2019