

External review of the Danish Accreditation Institution by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

**Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

November 2015

**1. Background and Context**

The Danish Accreditation Institution is an independent agency founded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education. The agency's role is to support the Danish HEIs' own responsibility for IQA and quality improvement. The agency also serves to create public and international trust in the quality of Danish higher education. The primary assignment of the agency is to accredit HEIs as well as existing and new higher education programmes. Furthermore, the institution is producing summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of the accreditations as well as thematic reports on topical issues concerning higher education.

The recent law of July 2013 defines in a clearer manner than the previous law the structural division between the entities "The Accreditation Institution" and the "Accreditation Council".

The Accreditation Institution is tasked with all the steps of process leading up to, but not including the decision. The Accreditation Institution defines - in good understanding with the Accreditation Council and compliant with the law and by-laws - , the guidelines to be adhered to by the institutions in their documentation of good quality and quality assurance. The institution is undertaking the analyses of relevant documentation, leading to the development of an accreditation report, which after formal hearing at the HEI, is forwarded to the Accreditation Council for consideration.

The role of the Council is to take decisions of positive, conditional positive and rejection of accreditation, regarding individual programmes of higher education as well as HEIs. Decisions are based on the analysis reports and recommendations issued by the Accreditation Institution and the documentation from the HEIs.

The two entities constitute the system of accreditation in Denmark, but the focus of the ENQA review is the Danish Accreditation Institution.

The Danish Accreditation Institution has been a full member of ENQA since 2010 (at the time under the name of ACE Denmark – Accreditation Institution) and is applying for renewal of ENQA membership.

The Danish Accreditation Institution has been registered on EQAR since 2010 and is applying for renewal.

## 2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This review, will evaluate the way in which and to what extent the Danish Accreditation Institution 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 The Danish Accreditation Institution should be reconfirmed and to EQAR to support the Danish Accreditation Institution's application to the register.

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

### 2.1 Activities of the Danish Accreditation Institution within the scope of the ESG

In order for the Danish Accreditation Institution to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all activities of the Danish Accreditation Institution 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 the Danish Accreditation Institution have to be addressed in the external review:

- Accreditation of all public higher education institutions
- Accreditation of all public higher education programmes
- Activities related to thematic analyses based on the insights gained in the accreditation processes as well as analysis of topical issues related to higher education

## 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 the Danish Accreditation Institution including the preparation of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to the Danish Accreditation Institution;
- 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 five members: two quality assurance experts, an academic employed by a higher education institution, student member, and a labour market representative. One of the members will serve as the chair of the review panel, and another member as a review secretary. Two of the reviewers are nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the member national agencies. The third external reviewer is drawn from a nomination provided by the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). The nomination of the student member comes from the European Students' Union (ESU) and nomination of the labour market representative comes from Business Europe. In addition to the five 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 the Danish Accreditation Institution 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 the Danish Accreditation Institution's review.

### **3.2 Self-assessment by the Danish Accreditation Institution, including the preparation of a self-assessment report**

The Danish Accreditation Institution 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 the Danish Accreditation Institution 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 ENQA Guidelines for External Review of Quality Assurance Agencies, 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**

Danish Accreditation Institution 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 the Danish Accreditation Institution at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by Danish Accreditation Institution in arriving in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the major issues of the evaluation between the review panel and the Danish Accreditation Institution.

### **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 the Danish Accreditation Institution within 11 weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If Danish Accreditation Institution 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 Danish Accreditation Institution, finalise the document and submit it to Danish Accreditation Institution and 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.

Danish Accreditation Institution is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation applying for membership and the ways in which the Danish Accreditation Institution 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**

Danish Accreditation Institution 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. Danish Accreditation Institution 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 Danish Accreditation Institution. 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 Danish Accreditation Institution 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 Danish Accreditation Institution and ENQA and until it is approved by the Board the report may not be used or relied upon by Danish Accreditation Institution, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. Danish Accreditation Institution 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

Danish Accreditation Institution shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,500 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,500 EUR
Fee of the 3 other panel members	6,000 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	7,200 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses follow-up visit	1,600 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 33,200.00 EUR VAT excl. for a review team of 5 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, Danish Accreditation Institution 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 Danish Accreditation Institution 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	November 2015
Appointment of review panel members	December 2015
Self-assessment completed	January 2016
Pre-screening of SER by ENQA coordinator	February 2016
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	March 2016
Briefing of review panel members	March 2016
Review panel site visit	April 2016
Draft of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA coordinator for pre-screening	June 2016
Draft of evaluation report to Danish Accreditation Institution	July 2016
Statement of Danish Accreditation Institution to review panel if necessary	August 2016
Submission of final report to ENQA	August 2016
Consideration of the report by ENQA Board and response of Danish Accreditation Institution	September 2016
Publication of the report	September 2016

December 22, 2015



Anette Dørge, Executive Director  
Danish Accreditation Institution