

External review of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

December 2012

1. Background and Context

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) was established in 2005 and is an autonomous public institution, of national interest, whose main mission is the external evaluation of the Romanian higher education's quality, at the level of study programmes, as well as from the institutional point of view.

The agency's major objectives are:

- to improve the external evaluation methodology, in full compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education - ESG;
- to increase the role of students and employers, as final beneficiaries, within the process of evaluation and assurance of education quality;
- to create a quality culture in the Romanian higher education;
- to establish a permanent partnership with all institutions in the national higher education system (MECTS, CNCISIS, CNFIS, ACPART) as well as with the economic-social environment, in order to correlate higher education with the labour market.

ARACIS has been Full member of ENQA since 2009. Full membership was granted following an external review on 2 June 2009.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This is a type A review, as defined in the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*. It will evaluate the way in which and to what extent ARACIS fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether ARACIS should be reconfirmed Full Member of ENQA. The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards the reconfirmation of Full Membership.

3. The Review Process

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*.

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-evaluation by ARACIS including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the review panel to ARACIS;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the Review Committee of the ENQA Board;
- 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.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of five members: Four external reviewers (one or two quality assurance experts, representative(s) of higher education institutions, student member) and a review secretary. Three of the reviewers (including the review secretary) are nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the national agencies, and are drawn from senior serving members of Board/Council or staff of ENQA member agencies. The fourth external reviewer is drawn from a nomination provided by the European University Association (EUA). The nomination of the student member is asked from the European Students' Union (ESU). One of the panel members serves as the chair of the review.

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

ENQA will provide ARACIS 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 ARACIS review.

3.2 Self-evaluation by ARACIS, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report

ARACIS is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-evaluation process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-evaluation is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-evaluation report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation: background description of the current situation of the Agency; analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a summary of perceived strengths and weaknesses;
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which ARACIS fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the ESG. The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of four weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

ARACIS will draw up a draft proposal of schedule of 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 days. The approved schedule shall be given to ARACIS at least two months before the dates of the visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by ARACIS in arriving in Bucharest, Romania.

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

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 article 2. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ENQA membership criteria. A draft will be submitted for comment to ARACIS within two months of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If ARACIS 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 ARACIS, finalise the document and submit it to ARACIS and ENQA.

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

4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

ARACIS will consider the expert panel's report and inform ENQA of its plans to implement any recommendations contained in the report. Subsequent to the discussion of the evaluation results and any planned implementation measures with ENQA, the review report and the follow-up plans agreed upon will be published on the ARACIS website.

5. Budget

ARACIS shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,750 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,750 EUR
Fee of the 3 other panel members	8,250 EUR (2,750 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	5,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,250 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses (approximate)	6,000 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000 EUR for a review team of 5 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, ARACIS 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 ARACIS if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

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.

6. Indicative Schedule of the Review

The duration of the evaluation is scheduled to take about 11 months, from December 2012 to November 2013:

Self-evaluation starts	December 2012
Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	December 2012
Appointment of review panel members	December 2012
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	January 2013
Self-evaluation completed	March 2013
Briefing of review panel members	April 2013
Review panel site visit	June 2013
Draft of evaluation report to ARACIS	August 2013
Statement of ARACIS to review panel if necessary	September 2013
Submission of final report to ENQA	October 2013
Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of ARACIS	November 2013
Publication of report and implementation plan	November 2013