

External review of the Quality Assurance Unit of the Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges (VLUHR-QAU) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE  
September 2013

### 1. Background and Context

The Quality Assurance Unit of the Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges (VLUHR-QAU) has been operational since 1 January 2013. It has been established as result of a merger of the Quality Assurance Units of VLIR (VLIR QAU) and VLHORA (VLHORA QAU). It is the legal successor and builds upon the structure and procedures of the former agencies of VLIR and VLHORA.

The VLUHR- QAU is responsible for the coordination of the external assessments of professional and academic oriented programmes organised by the Flemish university colleges and universities. VLUHR-QAU predecessor agencies, VLIR and VLHORA, were given full ENQA membership status in 2000. Full membership of VLIR and VLHORA were reconfirmed on 7 September 2009 and 23 January 2009 respectively.

The ENQA policy on amalgamation of agencies requires that the newly established agency undergoes an external ENQA coordinated review within two years of the amalgamation being completed.

### 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 VLUHR-QAU 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 VLUHR-QAU should be granted Full Membership of ENQA.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting 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 VLUHR-QAU including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;

- A site visit by the review panel to VLUHR-QAU ;
- 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 VLUHR-QAU 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 VLUHR-QAU review.

### 3.2 Self-evaluation by VLUHR-QAU, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report

VLUHR-QAU 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 VLUHR-QAU 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 eight weeks prior to the site visit.

### 3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

VLUHR-QAU will draw up a draft proposal of schedule of the site visit to be submitted to the review panel 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 VLUHR-QAU at least one month before the dates of the visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by VLUHR-QAU in arriving in Brussels, Belgium.

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

### 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 VLUHR-QAU within two months of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If VLUHR-QAU 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 VLUHR-QAU, finalise the document and submit it to VLUHR-QAU 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

VLUHR-QAU will consider the expert panel's report and inform ENQA of its plans to implement any recommendations contained in the report. The review report will be published on the VLUHR-QAU website. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the Board.

### 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 to be used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether VLUHR-QAU has or has not met the membership criteria/ESG.

The working paper authored by the Panel is to be considered as a report owned by ENQA only after being approved by the ENQA Board.

Once submitted to VLUHR-QAU and ENQA and until the decision by the Board is made, the working paper may not be used or relied upon by VLUHR-QAU, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. VLUHR-QAU may use the report at its discretion only after the Board decision has been made.

VLUHR-QAU shall be aware that, should an application to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) be submitted, the Chair of the panel might be approached by the Register Committee for any request for clarification. The Chair of the panel may give a response but he/she is requested to copy the Director of ENQA on all correspondence.

### 6. Budget

VLUHR-QAU 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 30,000.00 EUR for a review team of 5 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, VLUHR-QAU 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 VLUHR-QAU 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.

#### 7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

The duration of the evaluation is scheduled to take about 18 months, from April 2013 to October 2014:

Self-evaluation starts	April 2013
Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	September 2013
Appointment of review panel members	November 2013
Self-evaluation completed	April 2014
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	May 2014
Briefing of review panel members	May 2014
Review panel site visit	June 2014
Draft of evaluation report to VLUHR-QAU	1 <sup>st</sup> half September 2014
Statement of VLUHR-QAU to review panel if necessary	September 2014
Submission of final report to ENQA	September-early Oct 2014
Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of VLUHR-QAU	October 2014
Publication of report	October 2014