

ENQA TARGETED REVIEW

# EVALUATION AGENCY OF BADEN- WÜRTTEMBERG (evalag)

OLIVER VETTORI,  
EVA FERNANDEZ DE LABASTIDA,  
GIULIANA SABBATINI, JAKUB BAKONYI  
31 MAY 2024

# CONTENTS

<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW .....	5
SCOPE OF THE REVIEW .....	5
MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2019 REVIEW .....	6
REVIEW PROCESS.....	6
<b>CHANGES WITHIN THE AGENCY</b> .....	<b>9</b>
HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM .....	9
EVALAG'S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE .....	10
EVALAG'S FUNDING.....	10
EVALAG'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES.....	10
<b>FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF EVALAG WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG) WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES</b> .....	<b>13</b>
ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE.....	13
ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE.....	18
ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS.....	21
<b>ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE</b> .....	<b>22</b>
ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE.....	22
ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE .....	28
ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES .....	31
ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS .....	34
ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES .....	35
ESG 2.6 REPORTING .....	37
ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS.....	38
<b>ENHANCEMENT AREAS</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>ESG 2.2</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>ESG 3.5</b> .....	<b>41</b>

<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>ANNEXES.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>60</b>
DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY EVALAG.....	60
OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL .....	60

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the analysis and conclusions of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) review of evalag - Evaluationsagentur Baden-Württemberg. The review was performed against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) following the methodology described in the Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews.

The purpose of the review was the renewal of evalag's membership in ENQA and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) registration for a period of 2024-2029.

The review took place from July 2023 to April 2024 with the site visit on 21-22 November 2023.

evalag (Evaluationsagentur Baden-Württemberg) was founded in 2000 as a foundation under public law and is committed to non-profit purposes. evalag operates both nationally (with focus on activities in the German Federal State of Baden-Württemberg) and abroad. The agency works independently and on the basis of internationally accepted standards.

evalag understands itself as a partner of higher education and scientific institutions supporting higher education and scientific institutions in their commitment to high quality in research, teaching and study and the entire organisation. evalag aims to work dialogue- and development-oriented and to contribute with customised instruments and procedures to the organisational development and to the promotion of the quality culture of higher education and scientific institutions. evalag also addresses these instruments and procedures as topics of research (which are not under the scope of this review).

This report addresses the ESG standards where evalag was evaluated as partially compliant by the EQAR Register Committee during the previous full external review of the agency in 2019, namely ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance and ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose.

Since the last full external review against ESG in 2019, evalag has also reported to EQAR several substantial changes related to changes in the structure of the agency and changes of some procedures and implementation of new ones. Therefore, this review also addresses the standards of the ESG Part 2 for the following new activities:

- Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg)
- Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure
- Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg)
- Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure
- Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan)

And the following standards affected by other types of substantive changes:

- ESG 2.3: consider the interaction between GAC and evalag, and their respective roles in the follow-up processes.
- ESG 2.5: analyse whether the new arrangements had any impact on the consistency of applying the accreditation criteria.

- ESG 2.6: analyse how evalag ensures that its final reports are also published if the institution does not forward the report to GAC.
- ESG 3.3:
  - Address the organisational change in light of the statutory change from 29 July 2021 leading to dual leadership effective as of 1 February 2022;
  - Address the organisational change in light of the statutory change from 28 January 2023 leading to establishing of Certification Commission.

The review panel was also asked to address ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance across all of evalag’s activities.

This report also addresses evalag’s selected enhancement areas ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose and ESG 3.5 Resources. During the review some matters regarding the compliance with ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis came up and that is why the standard is also addressed.

The summary of evalag’s compliance with the ESG Part 2 and Part 3, based on this review, is demonstrated in the table below:

**Summary of agency’s compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3)**

<b>ESG</b>	<b>Compliance according to the targeted review<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Compliance transferred from the last full review<sup>2</sup></b>
2.1	Compliant	N/A
2.2	Compliant (for new or changed QA activities only)	N/A
2.3	Partially compliant	N/A
2.4	Compliant (for new or changed QA activities only)	N/A
2.5	Compliant	N/A
2.6	Compliant	N/A
2.7	Compliant (for new or changed QA activities only)	N/A
3.1	Compliant	N/A
3.2	N/A	Compliant
3.3	Compliant	N/A
3.4	Partially compliant	N/A
3.5	N/A	Compliant
3.6	N/A	Compliant
3.7	N/A	Compliant

---

<sup>1</sup> Compliance refers to the focus areas that were evaluated in depth and are part of the Terms of Reference, i.e., standards that were only partially compliant with the ESG during the last full review, ESG Part 2 for newly introduced or changed QA activities of the agency, ESG 2.1 for all QA activities and any standard affected by substantive changes since the last full review. If any of the standards of Part 2 of the ESG are covered due to the newly introduced or changed QA activities, a remark “for new or changed QA activities only” is added in brackets to the compliance assessment.

<sup>2</sup> Compliance refers to the last EQAR Register Committee decision for renewal of inclusion on the Register, or in case when an agency is not renewing its registration in EQAR, compliance refers to the last ENQA Agency Review report and should its judgement differ from that of the panel, the judgement of the ENQA Board, as stipulated in the membership decision letter by the ENQA Board. Compliance refers to the QA activities of the agency that were reviewed during the previous full review.

# INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of evalag – Evaluationsagentur Baden-Württemberg with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. It is based on an external review conducted in July 2023-April 2024 and should be read together with the external review report of the agency's last full review against the ESG.

## BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

### BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA's regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015.

Registration on EQAR is the official instrument established by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for demonstrating an agency's ESG compliance. An external review is a prerequisite for registration.

As evalag has undergone three successful reviews against the ESG Parts 2 and 3, it is eligible and has opted for a targeted review. The purpose of a targeted review is to ensure the agency's compliance with the ESG by covering standards that were found partially compliant [during the agency's last renewal of registration in EQAR (or in case when an agency is not renewing its registration in EQAR, following the last ENQA Agency Review)] and on standards that could have been affected by substantive changes<sup>3</sup> during the past five years while at the same time further strengthening the enhancement part of the review.

### SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

evalag is carrying out the following activities within the scope of the ESG:

- Programme assessment procedures
- Institutional assessment procedures
- International Programme Accreditation
- International Institutional Accreditation
- Audits of quality management systems in Austria
- Institutional Accreditation of Swiss Higher Education Institutions
- Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development (CPD)
- Certification of Continual Professional Development (CPD) offers of HEIs
- new – Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg)
- new – Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure

---

<sup>3</sup> e.g. organisational changes, the launch of new external QA activities.

- new – Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg)
- new – Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure
- new – Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan)

The following activities of evalag are not included in the review as they are outside the scope of the ESG:

- Consultancy
- Peer-review based assessments of grant proposals
- Projects for the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts (MWK)
- Evaluation (outside the ESG)
- Cooperation and Research (ERASMUS+ projects).

## MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2019 REVIEW

In 2019, the EQAR Register Committee based on the ENQA review report and further considerations concluded that evalag demonstrated substantial compliance with the ESG (Part 2 and 3) as follows:

<b>ESG</b>	<b>Compliance in the last full review</b>
2.1	Compliance
2.2	Partial compliance
2.3	Compliance
2.4	Compliance
2.5	Compliance
2.6	Compliance
2.7	Compliance
3.1	Partial compliance
3.2	Compliance
3.3	Compliance
3.4	Compliance
3.5	Compliance
3.6	Compliance
3.7	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

## REVIEW PROCESS

The 2023 external targeted review of evalag was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*, the EQAR Procedures for Applications, and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the targeted review of evalag was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Oliver Vettori, Dean, Accreditation & Quality Management / Director, Program Management & Teaching and Learning Affairs at WU Vienna (Vienna University of Economics and Business) Austria – Chair, Academic (EUA nominee);
- Eva Fernandez de Labastida, Internationalisation and projects manager at Agency for the Quality of the Basque University System (Unibasq), Spain – Secretary, QA professional (ENQA nominee);
- Giuliana Sabbatini, Business and HEI consultant, Italy – Panel member, QA professional (ENQA nominee);
- Jakub Bakonyi, Master's degree in public administration at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland – Panel member, student (ESU nominee).

Anaïs Gourdin (Senior Project Manager), acted as the review coordinator.

The review took place from July 2023 to April 2024. The review panel received the SAR and held its first meeting on 19 October 2023. During this meeting, the review panel was provided with the input from review coordinator and the representative from EQAR – Blazhe Todorovski. Other meetings of the review panel took place on 15 November 2023.

The site visit was organized on 21 and 22 November 2023 in evalag's temporary premises in Mannheim. All evalag employees and some other participants attended the meetings face-to-face, while for the rest meetings were held in an online or hybrid mode. Thanks to the adequate technical arrangements, the online meetings did not have any negative impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the review.

The draft report was completed on 2 February 2024 and sent to evalag for the factual error check on 5 February 2024. evalag's feedback on factual errors was received on 19 February 2024. The final review report was submitted to the ENQA's Agency Review's Committee on 19 March 2024.

The review panel would like to confirm that the arrangements by ENQA ensured a smooth and well-coordinated review process. The review panel would also like to thank evalag team for making the panel feel welcome, for all the time and effort invested in the review, and for providing everything needed for the review.

All the findings and conclusions of this review report are the joint opinion of the review panel and have been agreed on during the report drafting process.

### **Self-assessment report**

The evalag team, including the Managing Directors, the staff from the Accreditation and Certification Department, members of the Accreditation Commission, the Certification Commission and of the Foundation Board and a group of evalag's external stakeholders who participated in the SWOT analysis, collaborated in the self-assessment process. The main steps of the self-assessment process were:

In January 2023, a retreat of the evalag team took place and was supported by an external moderator. The team mainly discussed organisational topics and upcoming challenges for the agency, including the areas to be focused on during the Targeted Review.

In February 2023, evalag set up an internal editorial team for the self-assessment report (SAR), including the Managing Directors who are the heads of the two departments of evalag, the head of administration and a project manager. The editorial team checked the basic guidelines and formalities for the Targeted Review provided by ENQA and EQAR, the evalag SAR from 2018, the ENQA report on evalag and the reconfirmation of membership by ENQA as well as the renewal decision of the



EQAR register committee of 2019 to define the Terms of Reference for the Targeted Review. The editorial team then had a first informal exchange on the Targeted Review with ENQA, with the aim of understanding the forthcoming proceedings better and to discuss the possible schedule.

In March 2023, evalag reported several substantive changes to EQAR regarding:

- the implementation of the Certification Commission and the new certification activities in the field of CPD Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg).
- an amendment to the Statutes of the evalag Foundation regarding the representation of students on the Foundation Board.

At that moment evalag also started to invite selected stakeholders: national and international clients, experts in various (international) accreditation and certification procedures, student members from expert groups, members of the Accreditation Commission, members of the Certification Commission and the Foundation Board to join in a SWOT analysis of evalag in June 2023.

In April 2023, evalag officially applied for renewal of the ENQA membership as well as the renewal of registration in EQAR.

In May 2023, EQAR reminded evalag about the need for further information regarding the “Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEfA and Swiss Health Professions Act” (GesBG/LPSan). evalag therefore submitted another substantive change report on this topic.

In June 2023, the external SWOT analysis with evalag’s stakeholders took place.

In July 2023, evalag was informed about the EQAR Register Committee’s acceptance of all Substantive Change Reports mentioned above. The second retreat of the evalag team took place in July 2023. Supported again by an external moderator and starting from the results of the external SWOT analysis, the team exchanged views on common values, the shared understanding of quality and on internal and external cooperation.

The final version of the Tripartite Terms of Reference (ToR) was agreed on 18 July 2023.

Between 7 July 2023 and 28 July 2023, the editorial team drafted a first version of the SAR. After thorough internal discussion, a second version was set up. This second draft was made available for the Chairperson of the Foundation Board, the Chairperson of the Accreditation Commission, and the Deputy Chairperson of the Certification Commission, who had agreed to proofreading, and for all members of the evalag team concerned with ESG-related projects. All feedback was collected until 15 August 2023. evalag submitted its SAR at the end of August 2023. Upon request, the evalag team reviewed it and handed in a final version of the SAR on October 2, 2023. The final version of the SAR is available on the evalag website since October 2, 2023.

## **Site visit**

The site visit was held on 21 and 22 November 2023 at the evalag’s temporary premises in Mannheim. The meetings with the evalag staff and the representative of the Ministry were organized face-to-face, however most of the meetings (e.g. with representatives of evalag’s Foundation Board, Accreditation and Certification Commissions, representatives of HEIs, representatives of the GAC, experts, and stakeholders) were organized using online technologies. The organization of the site visit was agreed in advance with the review panel, the agency and ENQA. The proposed technical arrangements (visual and sound equipment, internet connection) enabled the review panel to conduct the interviews in a proper manner.

There were specific meetings with the staff of the agency to deepen the exploration of issues concerning the selected enhancement areas.

The full list of meetings that the review panel conducted is provided below:

- Meeting with the CEOs and chair of the Foundation Board (hybrid);
- Meeting with evalag's representatives from the Senior Management Team;
- Meeting with evalag's staff on the agency's self-selected enhancement area (ESG 2.2)
- Meeting with evalag's staff on the agency's self-selected enhancement area (ESG 3.5)
- Meeting with key staff in charge of external QA activities;
- Meeting with members of the accreditation and certification commissions (online);
- Meeting with a representative of the Ministry of Science, Research and Art of Baden-Württemberg;
- Meeting with heads of some reviewed HEI representatives (online);
- Meeting with quality assurance officers of HEIs (online);
- Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool (online)
- Meeting with stakeholders (employers, students, local community) (online);
- Meeting with representatives of the GAC (online);
- A session to further investigate additional topics that arose during the site visit regarding agency's compliance with the ESG/Meeting with CEOs to clarify any pending issues.

During the site visit there was no necessity for translation.

It was decided not to conduct the separate interviews with the SAR working group considering the size of evalag, as all internal SAR working group members were already invited to the meeting.

The review panel was able to clarify pending issues with the CEOs during the last session.

The evalag temporary premises were appropriate for the site visit and were well-equipped for the interviews. The staff of evalag was very helpful in providing additional information.

The review panel appreciates the quality and the atmosphere of the interviews: all the participants were very open and engaged in the discussions.

## CHANGES WITHIN THE AGENCY

### HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The Interstate Treaty between the German federal states, which entered into force in 2018, and the related Specimen Decree, brought some changes to the German accreditation system. The main change relates to the decisions on accreditations. evalag – as well as the other accreditation agencies in Germany – no longer takes accreditation decisions itself but prepares an assessment report that the German Accreditation Council (GAC) uses to formally make a decision. The GAC also sets binding standards for all accreditation agencies operating in Germany.

evalag applies the criteria as set out in the Specimen Decree, which replace the accreditation criteria previously set by GAC. Due to its changed role, evalag's accreditation commission was reduced from

30 to seven members and a group of associated members and is now only taking decisions on international reviews.

Another important change was the shift of responsibility for the follow-up from the so called “assessing” agencies to GAC. The German accreditation system does not require agencies to follow-up on decisions made by the GAC. Rather, the GAC is the only body formally tasked with following up with the HEIs; albeit only on conditions set by GAC as part of the final decision. evalag has no information on when such a follow-up takes place. Based on that, the contracts between evalag and HEIs regarding assessment procedures leading to accreditation do not include any time or budget for follow-up activities or the monitoring of related actions. The new regulation on the German system applies for all agencies working within the Germany accreditation system.

## EVALAG’S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE

Since February 2022, evalag is managed by a dual leadership (Board of Directors). Each Managing Director also heads one of the two departments of evalag:

- The Accreditation and Certification Department that deals with all ESG-related projects and procedures.
- The Consulting, Evaluation and Organisational Development Department that deals with all projects and procedures outside the ESG.

The separation of the two departments is intended to ensure that there is no mixing of ESG-related accreditation and certification procedures and consulting activities.

In addition, the evalag Statutes were changed twice since the last review:

- In June 2021 regarding
  - the definition of consulting and research activities (outside the ESG),
  - the supervisory function of the Foundation Board regarding the Board of Directors,
  - the admissibility of online meetings for all commissions of evalag,
  - the definition of the tasks of the Board of Directors and the basic option of dual leadership,
  - the possibility of temporary admittance of a student member to the Foundation Board.
- In January 2023 regarding
  - the implementation of the Certification Commission.

## EVALAG’S FUNDING

The basic financial structure of evalag remains unchanged, although the Hochschulweiterbildung@BWV project of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg has brought considerable funds to evalag for the certification of Continual Professional Development in Higher Education in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. All ESG-related projects and procedures that are dealt within the Accreditation and Certification Department are fully market-funded. However, there is a legal change about tax liability of foundations under public law in Germany: since 2023, evalag is subject to VAT (7%).

## EVALAG’S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES

Since 2015, evalag has been carrying out procedures for the certification of continuing professional development courses at HEIs: institutional certifications or programme certifications. The procedures

were named (Institutional) certification of advanced study programmes. Due to a recommendation of the experts at the ENQA-Progress Visit in June 2022, evalag changed the term “advanced studies” to the more commonly known term “continuing professional development” (CPD). Beside this, the procedures have not been changed.

### **New external quality assurance activities:**

#### **Quality assurance activities concerning Continual Professional Development in Higher Education in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg**

Due to the growing importance of the CPD offers, the Managing Directors decided that evalag should participate in the tender for the Hochschulweiterbildung@BW project of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg which took place in 2021. evalag was awarded the contract and since March 2022 is part of the project, led by University of Freiburg. Nine (mostly newly hired) project managers of evalag are currently contributing a big part of their working time to this project. evalag has built on its proven experience with certification procedures for CPD at HEIs since 2015. The assessment procedures are free of charge for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg until end of 2024 (due to public funding from the project) and evalag expects a high workload in the upcoming months. In addition, there might be a high demand from HEIs in other federal states as well for whom evalag would offer the certification procedures since 2015.

Within the project, evalag is responsible for designing and implementing certification procedures for scientific and artistic CPD at state-run HEIs in Baden-Württemberg, and to award the new quality seal (called “Q-seal”) to those institutions or offers complying with the criteria and standards set. The guidelines for the four new procedures (German version) were adopted by the Foundation Board on 23 February 2023. The newly implemented Certification Commission of evalag met for the first time in April 2023.

The four new procedures are:

- Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal procedure
- Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure
- Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal procedure
- Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure

evalag has opted for two closely connected subtypes of the two procedures for CPD institutions and CPD offers: the normal and – if there is a valid institutional accreditation (system accreditation) of the HEI– a shortened procedure.

#### **Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan)**

The Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan) requires an accreditation for study programmes offering training for a designated health profession in Switzerland according to the Higher Education Act (HedA) and GesBG/LPSan. HEIs in Switzerland can prepare the accreditation of their respective programmes with any accreditation agency approved by the Swiss Accreditation Council (SAC) for the accreditation. evalag is eligible for this procedure and has received the approval of the SAC on 9th March 2020.

The procedure follows the requirements for the implementation of the procedure of the AAQ (Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance). The guidelines provided by evalag are identical with the Guidelines of AAQ, which were approved by the commission of AAQ on 27th March 2020. So far, evalag has not carried out such a procedure.

# FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF EVALAG WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG) WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

## ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

### ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

#### 2019 EQAR Register Committee decision

*The review panel found that evalag had no clear overarching strategy, bringing together planning, budgeting and risk assessment.*

*The review panel noted stakeholders are formally involved in evalag's governance through the Foundation Board, while the Board does not include a student member. Stakeholders are further involved in evalag's work through participation in workshops and similar activities. The panel recommended that a student be appointed to the Foundation Board.*

*Considering the concerns regarding the lack of an overarching strategy and that one important stakeholder group is not represented in evalag's governing structure, the Register Committee was unable to concur with the panel's conclusion of substantial compliance, but considered that evalag only partially complies with the standard.*

#### 2019 ENQA Board's decision

*The panel recommends evalag to appoint a student to the Foundation Board.*

#### ToR Focus areas ESG 3.1

- Address whether evalag has a clear overarching strategy that brings together planning, budgeting and risk assessment;
- Consider the level of effective student involvement in the Foundation Board of evalag (see Change Report from 14-06-2023)

#### Evidence

evalag is carrying out the following activities within the scope of the ESG according to the SAR:

- Programme assessment procedures
- Institutional assessment procedures
- International Programme Accreditation
- International Institutional Accreditation
- Audits of quality management systems in Austria

- Institutional Accreditation of Swiss Higher Education Institutions
- Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development (CPD)
- Certification of Continual Professional Development (CPD) offers of HEIs
- New activities since the last review:
  - Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan)
  - Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg)
  - Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure
  - Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg)
  - Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure

These activities are under the scope of the Accreditation and Certification Department that deals with all ESG-related projects and procedures.

The projects and procedures outside the ESG (consultancy activities, peer-review based assessments of grant proposals, projects for the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts (MWK), evaluation (outside the ESG) and cooperation and research activities (Erasmus+ projects)) are outside the scope of this review and are managed by the Consulting, Evaluation and Organisational Development Department that deals with all projects and procedures outside the ESG.

With regard of the external quality assurance procedures run since the last review, the following table gives an overview of the completed procedures under the scope of the ESG for the period 2019 – June 2023.

Regarding the new activities, only two shortened procedures of the certification of CPDs, one at institutional level and another one at programme level have been done. The Managing Directors aim to expand evalag's activities further in the certification of CPD. These objectives will be included in the new strategy. Although the legal situation post 2024 (once the project is over) regarding CPD certifications in Baden-Württemberg is still quite unclear, it will determine the HEIs' demand for certifications and therefore, evalag's activities in this area.

Completed Procedures	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 (until June)
Programme assessment procedures / Programmakkreditierung Deutschland *	6	26	18	17	18
Institutional assessment procedures / Systemakkreditierung Deutschland	1	1	2	2	2
International Programme Accreditation *	2	1	3	2	4
International institutional Accreditation	1	0	0	2	3
Audits of quality management in Austria	1	1	3	2	3
Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan)	0	0	0	0	0
Institutional Accreditation of Swiss HEIs	0	0	2	1	0
Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development (CPD)	0	2	0	1	0
Certification of Continual Professional Development (CPD) offers of HEIs	2	2	1	0	0
Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg)	-	-	-	0	0
Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure	-	-	-	0	1
Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg)	-	-	-	0	0
Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure	-	-	-	0	1

Table 1. Overview of the completed procedures under the scope of the ESG for the period 2019 – June 2023.

\* If the accreditation procedures referred to bundles of programmes, those were not counted as individual decisions, but as a complete bundle. (Source: evalag SAR 2023).

After the Renewal Decision of November 2019 of the EQAR Register Committee considering that evalag partially complied with the standard ESG 3.1, due to the lack of an overarching strategy and that students were not represented in evalag's governing structure (Foundation Board), the agency decided to start a strategic reflection as it is described in the SAR. However, several circumstances (like the COVID19 pandemic and the need to adapt to the situation moving to remote working and a change of management) delayed this process.

Once the new management was in (February 2022), the agency started a change process on the operational and structural level regarding digitisation, public image, work environment and human resources to ensure evalag to be fit for future. The recent additions also include a newly implemented project management system which helps to gain a quick and up-to-date overview of personal and financial resources regarding single projects, for each of the two departments or the agency as whole. This allows a better planning and risk management regarding which projects evalag should actively apply and/or which enquiries of HEIs can be answered positively in relation to the availability of staff.



Finally, the evalag team had to move from their previous premises. The Managing Directors and the Foundation Board decided to change evalag's premises due to several reasons (i.e. the state of the building, costs and the new (digital) working concept). In a first step, evalag temporarily moved to a co-working space near Mannheim's main train station (temporary premises where the site visit took place). Eventually the decision was made to leave Mannheim: evalag will move into new premises at Europaplatz in Heidelberg sometime in 2024.

Despite the delaying factors, the Managing Directors have developed a medium- and long-term overarching strategy concept for the whole agency which is based on internal analyses and the results of the SWOT analysis. As explained during the interviews the strategy concept was discussed with the Foundation Board at its meeting on 10 November 2023 and a draft of the strategy was made available to the panel during the site visit. The formal approval of the strategy will be done by summer 2024.

During the interviews the issue of having clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement was raised, as the current "Mission statement and understanding of quality" published on the website dates from October 2018 and it might be outdated due to all the changes made. The Managing Directors explained that the Mission Statement will be updated together with the new strategy. In this sense, evalag is also undergoing an update of its corporate design and the website will be also renewed by the end of 2023 or beginning of 2024. The mission statement and a summary of the strategy will be published there. During the site visit the new design of the website was shown.

Additionally, the last review also included a recommendation regarding student involvement in the Foundation Board. Within the Foundation Board, there were some reservations about the permanent involvement of a student member, particularly regarding the central supervisory tasks of the Foundation Board in financial and human resources matters and the discussion of projects and strategic questions of the Consulting, Evaluation and Organisational Development Department of evalag. Another concern was the potential lack of commitment of students and the period in which they could be part of the Foundation Board. At the same time, the relevance of student participation in ESG-related decisions of the Foundation Board was recognized and everyone agreed that the concerns could be overcome in practice.

In July 2021, the Statutes of evalag were thereby amended regarding the composition of the Foundation Board as follows:

"d) If international standards in the field of study and teaching are dealt with, a student member may be called upon as a permanent or temporary, non-voting guest."

evalag explained that in practice the Foundation Board has only a formal role in ESG-related decisions: although the Foundation Board officially adopts new procedural guidelines of the Agency, it relies on documents that have already been fully prepared by the Accreditation Commission or the Certification Commission. In both commissions – that are part of evalag's governing structure, as stated during the interviews –, student members are actively involved in the drafting process and in decision making and are treated equally, as confirmed during the interviews. In addition, when revising or redesigning procedural guidelines, evalag generally conducts stakeholder workshops with student participation to identify necessary improvements and additions at an early stage, e. g. a stakeholder workshop with student participants to discuss modifications of the guidelines for the audit of quality management in Austria that took place on 3 December 2021.

Considering all this, formally there is now a student member seat in the Foundation Board, but the student representative has not participated yet in a meeting of the Foundation Board by the time the site-visit was done. As also confirmed during the interviews, the Managing Directors aim to reflect on student involvement beyond a seat in the top governing body.

## Analysis

The new activities since the last review within the scope of the ESG for the purposes of the targeted review are as follows:

- o Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan)
- o Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg)
- o Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure
- o Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg)
- o Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure

The review panel considered each of these activities through the standards of part two of the ESG. Further detail can be found in the report against standards 2.1-2.7. The website contains information about each process and the published reports resulting from these processes.

The panel believes there is a clear distinction between external quality assurance and the other fields of work of evalag considering the clear distribution of tasks of both departments and the information on the website, as well as the statements obtained from HEIs.

As stated in the ToR the focus areas in this standard for the targeted review were to address whether evalag has a clear overarching strategy that brings together planning, budgeting and risk assessment and to consider the level of effective student involvement in the Foundation Board of evalag.

Regarding the first topic, the panel could find evidence of the process to develop a new overarching strategy that brings together planning, budgeting and risk assessment. It can be argued that more progress would have been possible within the past five years, but this would unfairly disregard some important factors (COVID-19, leadership change) that were beyond the agency's immediate sphere of influence. In fact, during the interviews with the management and staff it was clear that some actions were already implemented, for example regarding risk assessment when choosing which projects to accept and the way to check staff availability supported using a new project management software. The draft strategy which is currently being discussed covers also aspects of planning, budgeting and risk assessment and considers some of the suggestions made in previous reviews as to aiming for more international visibility. The panel is positive that the new strategy, due to be formally approved in July 2024, will benefit evalag's work in the future, if everything that was orally discussed finds its way into the final paper.

In relation with the second focus topic, even if there is a change in the statutes to allow for student involvement in the Foundation Board, ("If international standards in the field of study and teaching are dealt with, a student member may be called upon as a permanent or temporary, non-voting guest"), which can be interpreted as formally fulfilling the requirement. Still, the panel considers that this approach is mainly formal as the ESG 3.1. states "Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work", and does not restrict this to external review activities in line with the ESG, and more could and should be done in the future. In fact, evalag confirmed during the interviews that the Foundation Board has a limited role regarding the development of ESG-related decisions as the Foundation Board officially adopts new procedural guidelines of the Agency, but is

itself relying on documents that have already been fully prepared by the Accreditation Commission or the Certification Commission, where students are present. The panel is not concerned about formal participation of students in the Accreditation and Certification Commissions, but believes that evalag could probably benefit from the participation of students in all evalag bodies as the perspective of a younger generation could also have a positive influence on strategy and positioning of the agency; and that all stakeholders (see section regarding ESG 2.2) could be more directly involved in the development of the review procedures. Regarding evalag's relations with different stakeholders, the panel could confirm how HEIs are really put up and front; yet also how other stakeholders are not so much engaged with but limited to representative functions in the bodies. The panel perceives a need to map evalag's relevant stakeholders more strategically and to find ways of involving them effectively and innovatively rather than ritually. This explicitly includes students, whose contributions could be beneficial beyond the procedural level, and other types of learners, to determine what the value of CPD would be in the long term.

The agency's mission statement is published on the agency website, but as commented before it should be updated considering all the changes since the last review and taking into account the new strategy. In addition, the panel considers that evalag could communicate better their processes, mission statement and quality policy and/or objectives to the wider public (involving more stakeholders than the ones directly involved in their quality assurance activities).

#### **Panel commendations**

1. The panel commends evalag on their excellent reputation among HEIs in the region.

#### **Panel recommendations**

1. The panel recommends mapping evalag's relevant stakeholders more strategically and finding ways of involving them effectively and innovatively rather than ritually. This specifically includes students, whose involvement in governance even after the recent amendment is formal rather than actual.
2. The panel recommends searching ways to communicate evalag's entire quality processes, including its mission statement and quality policy and/or objectives, to the wider public more effectively and more clearly.

#### **Panel conclusion: compliant**

### ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

#### **ToR Focus areas due to substantial changes**

- i. Address the organisational change in light of the statutory change from 29 July 2021 leading to dual leadership effective as of 1 February 2022 (see Change Report from 08-11-2022);
- ii. Address the organisational change in light of the statutory change from 28 January 2023 leading to establishing of Certification Commission (see Change Report from 14-06-2023).

## Evidence

Current evalag structure is as follows:

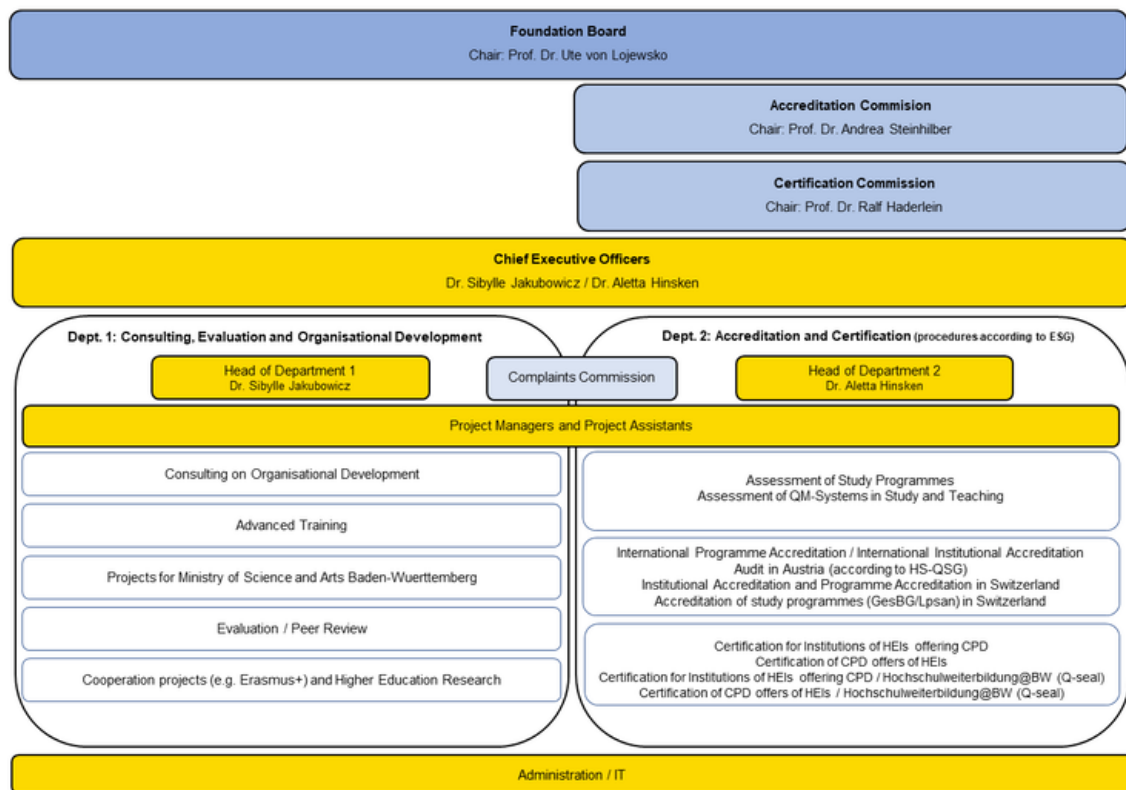


Figure 1. evalag structure.

As described in the SAR, and explained during the interviews, in June 2022, there was a change in the Statutes of evalag to enable dual leadership (Board of Directors). Each Managing Director or CEO heads one of the two departments of evalag:

- The Accreditation and Certification Department that deals with all ESG-related projects and procedures;
- The Consulting, Evaluation and Organisational Development Department that deals with all projects and procedures outside the ESG.

The current Managing Directors opted for this solution, on the one hand because the general coordination tasks are numerous due to the large number of projects in both departments, and on the other hand to ensure coherent strategy planning, risk management, and human resources management. The new Statutes contain a comprehensive description of the tasks, rights and obligations of the Managing Directors and the Foundation Board's duty to supervise the Board of Directors.

The new management structure does not change evalag's independence. The agency acts autonomously and takes full responsibility for its organisation, its operations, and formal outcomes without third party influence. As stated in the SAR and confirmed during the interviews, there is a clear policy to avoid conflict of interest regarding the activities developed in both departments.

Moreover, there was a second change in the statutes (28 January 2023) to establish the Certification Commission, in addition to the Accreditation Commission. The Certification Commission will be

responsible for all tasks related to the implementation of formal procedures for the certification of scientific CPD offers and scientific CPD institutions. Its tasks include:

- (a) Determination of assessment norms, criteria, and procedural principles for certification procedures, which ensure consistency and uniformity in the implementation of procedures,
- (b) (Continued) Development of procedural principles for certification procedures,
- (c) Selection of reviewers,
- (d) Making decisions on assessment reports on certification procedures, unless otherwise specified,
- (e) Suspending decisions on certification procedures.

The commission consists of eight members: (a) three members from the scientific staff of HEIs (b) two members with leading functions of scientific CPD institutions, c) two representatives of professional practice, and d) one student or participant in a CPD offer.

The establishment of the Certification Commission was considered necessary to include special expertise in the field of CPD to adequately perform the above-mentioned tasks. The establishment of the Certification Commission has also been a precondition to enable evalag to seize its active role within the framework of the Hochschulweiterbildung@BW project.

The Certification Commission informs the Foundation Board about its activities and decisions. The new Commission is itself independent in its certification decisions. When the site visit was done only two procedures regarding CPD reviews were already finished.

## **Analysis**

The panel found that the organisational independence is sufficiently guaranteed by the Statutes. The change regarding the dual leadership with two Managing Directors each in charge of one of the departments seems like a good option to manage them adequately while maintaining the independence of both departments' activities. In addition, as confirmed during the interviews, there is a clear policy to avoid conflict of interest regarding the activities developed in both departments including:

- Organisational separation of consultancy activities and reviews: different teams and people assigned. In addition, HEIs are not allowed to have obtained any consultancy activities by evalag in the last six years before a review.
- If the staff change from one department to the other, they won't continue to work on the same project.

The creation of the Certification Commission was needed to include special expertise in the field of CPD to adequately perform the external reviews to award the Q-seal certificates. Moreover, the establishment of the Certification Commission was also a precondition to enable evalag to seize its active role within the framework of the Hochschulweiterbildung@BW project.

The Certification Commission informs the Foundation Board about the commission's activities and decisions. The new Commission is itself independent in its certification decisions. The independence of outcomes is guaranteed by the set-up of the Certification Commission, whose members are appointed by the Foundation Board with its independence guaranteed in the statutes. The role of the Certification Commission in decision-making is related to the implementation of formal procedures for the certification of scientific CPD offers and scientific CPD institutions. In addition, the Commission is also involved in selecting reviewers, with a fitting academic and disciplinary background and expertise on CPD and in safeguarding the independence of these experts.

The panel concludes that both changes don't interfere with the independence of the agency. The role and future impact of the new CPD procedures' project in the financial structure of evalag, in their dedicated human resources, and in their governance (own certification commission) is still unknown and there is some uncertainty about its future once the project finishes at the end of 2024. The panel believes that some more long-term reflection on the potential risks and chances would be helpful for evalag.

### **Panel conclusion: compliant**

## ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

### **Evidence**

In the 2019 review report, it was stated that *“The Foundation Board decided in 2015 to regularly, every three years, analyse the results of its external quality assurance activities. As a consequence, evalag completed two thematic analyses so far. The thematic analysis “evalag – a Learning Organisation” (6th June, 2016) that was conducted in 2016 focuses on trends and developments of the agency’s activities from 2010 to 2015 and is based on the analysis of the minutes of the Accreditation Commission and the annual business reports. The agency’s self-concept as a learning organisation was put forward in this thematic analysis. Following this, the thematic analysis of 2018 “Thematic Analysis 2016-2018” (20.08.2018) took the same approach but due to the short observed period (i.e. from 2016 to 2018) the analysis provided rather limited observation of trends and developments of the external quality assurance activities of evalag and focused rather more on the challenges of the peer review and how evalag dealt with these challenges.”*

As part of the external review, the panel checked evalag's website and the publications available under the specific section. The “Publications” section of evalag offers access through a database to articles, conference papers, and magazines as well as other publications by evalag employees. Moreover, the database contains the annual business reports of the foundation.

Since 2019, there have been several publications mostly dealing with the consultancy activities of evalag and focusing on research papers regarding different higher education aspects (...), annual reports and publications from projects evalag is involved in.

During the interviews with evalag's management and staff they indicated that there were two new publications regarding thematic analysis since the last review, but that they were published in a specific place under the “ENQA review” section.

### **Analysis**

Even if ESG 3.4 “Thematic analysis” was not a focus area of this targeted review, as part of the external review process, the panel checked evalag's website and the publications available. During this check and supported by the interviews with evalag's management and staff, the panel found that since 2018 there were two new publications named “Thematic analysis 2018 to mid-2021” and “Thematic analysis mid-2021 to mid-2023”. Nevertheless, these significantly digressed from the previous approach and in the eyes of the panel could not be taken as reports that describe and analyse the general findings of evalag's external quality assurance activities as established by the standard. These reports give merely an overview of the most important projects, publications and events in the period under study, more

like an annual report. During the interviews with the management and the staff, they explained that they have attended some events where the interpretation of Thematic analysis was discussed and that they might have understood that this could be considered as thematic analysis in a broad or flexible interpretation of the standard.

Already in the 2019 review it was emphasised that “The agency’s capacity for conducting analyses, in addition to its consulting capacity, contributes to the distinct profile of evalag as a quality assurance organisation” which could foster the development of thematic analysis. The panel of the 2019 review already suggested “to expand the scope of thematic analyses by focusing on best practices and recommendations, e.g. as evolving from the follow-up of its QA procedures”.

Considering evalag’s capacity for conducting analysis, such as the two thematic analyses that the agency conducted in 2016 and 2018 and the reports produced in the projects evalag participates in, the panel believes that evalag should take advantage of the experience gained through its involvement in projects and some other consultancy activities to work on thematic analysis reports.

Taking into account that the reports published after the last review cannot be considered as thematic analyses, the panel concludes that evalag complies only partially with the standard.

### **Panel recommendations**

3. The panel recommends resuming the work on thematic analysis, which was abandoned after 2018, particularly in light of the severe changes in the “German system”.

### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

1. The panel suggests collaboration with other agencies nationally or internationally in areas where evalag is working within the same regulatory framework.
2. The panel suggest building on the suggestion from the 2019 review “to expand the scope of thematic analyses by focusing on best practices and recommendations, e.g. as evolving from the follow-up of its QA procedures”.

### **Panel conclusion: partially compliant**

## **ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part I of the ESG.

### **Evidence**

The SAR sets out how evalag’s QA procedures address the standards of Part I of the ESG. The SAR presents a mapping grid and further descriptions that elaborate how each standard of the Part I of the ESG is included in the criteria applied in evalag’s new procedures. The previous activities’ mapping grid can be found in the SAR for the 2019 review (annex 2k of the 2019 SAR). All the guidelines are published on evalag’s website.

	ESG 1.1	ESG 1.2	ESG 1.3	ESG 1.4	ESG 1.5	ESG 1.6	ESG 1.7	ESG 1.8	ESG 1.9	ESG 1.10
<b>A</b>		x	x	X	X	x	x	x	X	X (7 years)
<b>B</b>	1.1 & 1.2	1.3 & 4	4	4	3	3 & 4	5	1 & 2	5	
<b>C</b>	1.1 & 1.2	1.3 & 4	4	4 (Specimen decree)	3 (Specimen decree)	3 & 4 (Specimen decree)	5 Specimen decree)	Specimen Decree (procedure C only applies to HEIs with a valid system accreditation procedure, whose CPD offers have already been integrated into the internal quality management system and the corresponding processes)	5	(8 years)
<b>D</b>		2	2 & 3	1, 3 & 4	5	2, 4 & 5	6	1, 3 & 6	6	(8 years)
<b>E</b>		2	2 & 3	1, 3 & 4	5	2, 4 & 5	6	1, 3 & 6	6	(8 years)

Table 2. Adaptation from evalag SAR and annexes.

A: Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEfA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan)

B: Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal procedure

C: Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure

D: Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal procedure

E: Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure

The new procedures are further described in the specific guidelines for each of them. The ones related with the certification of CPD are included as annexes to the SAR:

- Annex 2 - Certification Guidelines for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal procedure (Decision of the Foundation Board of 23 February 2023)
- Annex 3 - Certification Guidelines for Institutions of system-accredited HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – shortened procedure (Decision of the Foundation Board of 23 February 2023)
- Annex 4 - Certification Guidelines for Continual Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal procedure (Decision of the Foundation Board of 23 February 2023)
- Annex 5 - Certification Guidelines for Continual Professional Development Offers of HEIs based on Accredited Study Programmes within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – shortened procedure (Decision of the Foundation Board of 23 February 2023)



In all of them it is stated that “the assessment takes into account the quality standards of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung (DGWF) and of the Netzwerk Fortbildung Baden-Württemberg. The criteria also take into account the international standards according to ESG (European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Part I) and are based on the recommendations for quality development in university continuing education of Swissuni (02.10.2009).” It is also stated that the certification (= quality seal) is issued for a period of eight years. The same criteria apply for normal and shortened procedures, the difference relates to the methodology used (see ESG 2.3).

The SAR explains that Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure only applies to HEIs with a valid system accreditation, whose CPD offers have already been integrated into the internal quality management system and the corresponding processes. In the case of Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure only applies to CPD offers based on study programmes with a valid programme accreditation. Therefore, the standards stipulated in the Specimen Decree are applicable, by extension, to these two procedures.

In the case of the Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), the SAR includes two links to the evalag guidelines and to the AAQ guidelines, on which evalag guidelines are based. One of the requirements to undergo this kind of review is that the institution offering the programme is already institutionally accredited.

## **Analysis**

Regarding the EQA activities already in place in 2019, as there have been no changes since the last review on the review criteria the panel can agree with the conclusion of the previous review that “the standards of ESG Part I are covered in the criteria of the agency’s procedures.” The 2019 review report also addressed that “All ten ESG standards are covered by criteria in each of the ten evalag’s QA procedures. The only exception is ESG 1.10 (cyclical external quality assurance) which is not covered in the international programme accreditations and institutional certifications of advanced study programmes. The panel finds this understandable given the specific, incidental nature of the listed procedures.”

Regarding the new activities, the standards of part I of the ESG are covered as follows:

### **1.1 Policy for quality assurance**

According to the SAR, Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continuing Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal (Annex II) and shortened (Annex III) procedures meet this standard because these procedures are designed as the classic institutional accreditation procedure. In both cases, the criterion I. Objectives and profile of the institution and specifically sections 1.1 and 1.2 regarding the published strategy for quality assurance and if it is formulated with the participation of relevant stakeholders, and the alignment of the strategy for CPD with the profile and strategic objectives of the HEI meet the standard.

In the case of rest of the new procedures, as they are on the level of individual programmes, the SAR argues that the standard does not apply. Nevertheless, these programmes or CPD offers are part of an institution’s academic offer and should be included in their quality assurance system. In fact, the accreditation of Study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss health Professions Act can only be carried out on condition that the HEI is already institutionally accredited. In the case, of the Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for

HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal procedure, the criteria 6 deals with Quality Assurance and it establishes “For the quality assurance of the CPD offer, processes and instruments for quality assurance are implemented and documented, which systematically involve all stakeholders. The quality control loops are closed.” which could be in line with ESG 1.1, in the case of the Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shortened procedure, the same criteria are used.

## **1.2 Design and approval of programmes**

The evalag guidelines for the accreditation of study programmes according to HFKG and GesBG contain the standards to review study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan). In its annex II, the specific standards for programme accreditation are set and ESG 1.2 is covered by Standard 1. Ausbildungsziele and Standard 2. Konzeption.

The Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continuing Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal (Annex II) and shortened (Annex III) procedures consider standard 1.2 in part III “Criteria for the certification of CPD institutions” 1.3 The group of experts examines: “if the formulated quality objectives meet national and international standards and guidelines.” and 4. “Teaching and learning” whether “The institution ensures an academic level of its CPD offerings. The teaching-learning settings are comprehensively geared to the needs and interests of the participants.”

In the case of the Certification for Continuing Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal (Annex 4) and shortened (Annex 5) procedures, the standards are aligned with ESG 1.2 on criteria 2. “Curriculum” and could also include criteria 1. “Profile of the CPD offer” as it addresses if “The CPD offer has clearly formulated qualification objectives that correspond to national and international standards. The qualification objectives of the CPD offer consider the labour market perspective as well as the special needs of the target group and are communicated transparently.”

## **1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment**

Regarding the standards to review study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), standard 2 “Konzeption” covers ESG 1.3.

The Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continuing Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal (Annex II) and shortened (Annex III) procedures consider standard 1.3 in part III “Criteria for the certification of CPD institutions” 4. “Teaching and learning” which is defined as follows: “The institution ensures an academic level of its CPD offerings. The teaching-learning settings are comprehensively geared to the needs and interests of the participants.” Specifically, in 4.3 where the group of experts examines “the student-centeredness of the teaching-learning processes, taking into account the diversity of the participants.”

In the case of the Certification for Continuing Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal (Annex 4) and shortened (Annex 5) procedures, the standards are aligned with ESG 1.3 on criterion 2. “Curriculum” and criterion 3. “Examinations”.

## **1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**

Regarding the standards to review study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), standard 2 “Konzeption” also covers ESG 1.4.

The Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continuing Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal (Annex II) and shortened (Annex III) procedures consider standard 1.4 in part III “Criteria for the certification of CPD institutions” standard 4 “Teaching and learning”, specifically in 4.2 where the group of experts examines: “the appropriate permeability and appropriate access conditions to CPD offers (internal and external).”

In the case of the Certification for Continuing Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal (Annex 4) and shortened (Annex 5) procedures, the standards are aligned with ESG 1.4 via criterion I “Profile of the CPD offer”, standard 3 “Examinations” and standard 4 “Organisation of CPD offers”.

### **1.5 Teaching staff**

Regarding the standards to review study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), standard 3 “Umsetzung” covers ESG 1.5.

The Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continuing Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal (Annex II) and shortened (Annex III) procedures consider standard 1.5 in part III “Criteria for the certification of CPD institutions” standard 3 “Resources” (adequacy of human resources to ensure all tasks) and standard 4 “Teaching and learning”, specifically, in 4.1 where the group of experts examines “the procedures established at the institution to ensure the academic and methodological-didactic level of the CPD offers.”

In the case of the Certification for Continuing Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal (Annex 4) and shortened (Annex 5) procedures, the standards are aligned with ESG 1.5 via criterion 5 “Resources”.

### **1.6 Learning resources and student support**

Regarding the standards to review study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), standard 3 “Umsetzung” covers ESG 1.6.

The Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continuing Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal (Annex II) and shortened (Annex III) procedures consider standard 1.6 in part III “Criteria for the certification of CPD institutions” standards 3 “Resources” and 4 “Teaching and learning”.

In the case of the Certification for Continuing Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal (Annex 4) and shortened (Annex 5) procedures, the standards are aligned with ESG 1.6 via criteria 2 “Curriculum”, 4 “Organisation of CPD offers” and 5 “Resources”.

### **1.7 Information management**

Regarding the standards to review study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), they don’t cover specifically ESG 1.7, but then the standard would be covered by the institutional accreditation standards, specifically by standard 2 “Governance”, as the institution should be already accredited.

The Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continuing Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal (Annex II) and shortened (Annex III) procedures consider standard 1.7 in part III “Criteria for the certification of CPD institutions” standard 5 “Quality assurance”.

In the case of the Certification for Continuing Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal (Annex 4) and shortened (Annex 5) procedures, the standards are aligned with ESG 1.7 via criterion 6 “Quality assurance”.

### **1.8 Public information**

Regarding the standards to review study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), they don't cover specifically ESG 1.8, but then the standard would be covered by the institutional accreditation standards, specifically by standard 5 “Interne und externe Kommunikation”, as the institution should be already accredited.

The Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continuing Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal (Annex II) and shortened (Annex III) procedures consider standard 1.8 in part III “Criteria for the certification of CPD institutions” standards 1 “Objectives and profile of the institution” and 2 “Governance”. The SAR adds that the shortened procedure only applies to HEIs with a valid system accreditation procedure, whose CPD offers have already been integrated into the internal quality management system and the corresponding processes.

In the case of the Certification for Continuing Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal (Annex 4) and shortened (Annex 5) procedures, the standards are aligned with ESG 1.8 via criteria 1 “Profile of the CPD offer”, 3 “Examinations” and 6 “Quality assurance”.

### **1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes**

Regarding the standards to review study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), they don't cover specifically ESG 1.9, but the standards would be covered by the institutional accreditation standards, specifically by standard 2 “Governance” and 3 “Lehre, Forschung und Dienstleistungen”, as the institution should be already accredited.

The Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continuing Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal (Annex II) and shortened (Annex III) procedures consider standard 1.9 in part III “Criteria for the certification of CPD institutions” standard 5 “Quality assurance”. The SAR adds that the shortened procedure only applies to HEIs with a valid system accreditation procedure, whose CPD offers have already been integrated into the internal quality management system and the corresponding processes.

In the case of the Certification for Continuing Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal (Annex 4) and shortened (Annex 5) procedures, the standards are aligned with ESG 1.9 via criterion 6 “Quality assurance”.

### **1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance**

Regarding the standards to review study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), it is established that the validity of the accreditation decision is 7 years. In the case of CPD institutions and offers the validity of the certification is 8 years, so it is implied that they should undergo cyclical external quality assurance. In the view of the panel and in light of the fact that political objectives in Germany regarding CPD are not yet clear, this seems sufficient.

The panel considers that the SAR and the guidelines for each of the procedures under the scope of this targeted review show how their criteria are aligned with part I of the ESG. In some cases, they are covered by a preceding review at the institutional level.

Nevertheless, given the nature of the CPD certification, there could be some risk as it seems to be more driven by external quality assurance than by internal quality assurance. A better balance needs to be found in the future, but this is, first and foremost, a political issue for now.

The criteria that evalag applies in its procedures depend partially on the external regulators, e.g. evalag procedures that are conducted in Switzerland must consider the specific legislation of the country.

To summarise, the panel believes that the information provided by evalag demonstrates how the standards of ESG Part I are covered in the criteria of the agency's new procedures. The interviews with stakeholders and the examination of examples of reports (only CPD certifications, as there have been yet no reviews of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan)) confirm that the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes as described in Part I of the ESG is addressed in the QA procedures of evalag.

The panel concludes that evalag's newest QA procedures sufficiently address Part I of the ESG.

**Panel conclusion: compliant**

**ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE**

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

**2019 EQAR Register Committee decision**

*The Register Committee noted that the processes and criteria for evalag's work outside of the German accreditation system are designed by the Foundation Board. Based on the analysis by the review panel the Committee understood that students have little involvement in designing evalag's own processes and are also not involved in the Foundation Board.*

*The involvement of students in developing the international accreditation and evaluation processes was a recommendation from the previous ESG review of evalag in 2014, but has not yet been addressed.*

*While the Register Committee welcomed evalag's commitment expressed in its statement on the review report, no changes have been made as yet. The Committee was therefore unable to concur with the panel's conclusion of substantial compliance, but considered that evalag only partially complies with the standard.*

**2019 ENQA's Board decision**

*evalag is recommended to broaden the active involvement of stakeholders (including the representatives of higher education institutions, employers, and students) in the design and development of the review methodologies. This includes the representation of all relevant stakeholders, including students, on the Foundation board, but should also go beyond just the representation that is provided through the Foundation Board, the Accreditation Commission and the Appeals Commission and include active and regular discussions on procedures and methodology in the agency's bodies.*

**ToR Focus areas**

Consider how does the agency ensure effective involvement of students in the Foundation Board and in their involvement in the design of the processes and criteria for evalag's work outside the German

accreditation system, which are in the mandate of the Foundation Board (see Change Report from 14-06-2023);

This standard should be addressed for all evalag's procedures outside the German accreditation system and not only within the newly launched activities.

### **Evidence**

As stated in the SAR and explained during the interviews, evalag asks all participants (HEIs and experts) at the end of each procedure to provide anonymous feedback regarding the proceedings and the service offered. Members of the staff analyse the collected data and present the aggregated data during a team meeting. This team meeting serves as a reflection on the fitness of the procedures, and a verification whether the aims and objectives of each procedure are met. In addition, these regular team meetings serve to discuss new ideas on how to improve services.

As described in the ESG 3.1, students are not part of the Foundation Board, although with the change in the statutes they could be called as permanent or temporary non-voting guests, if international standards in the field of study and teaching are dealt with. Students are part of the Accreditation Commission and the newly created Certification Commission. The students have the same tasks and are treated equally as the rest of the members of the corresponding commission.

In case of important changes or a general review of existing procedures and guidelines, there is always a focus group discussion with stakeholders – including students. evalag initiates such focus groups to discuss and jointly develop the prepared drafts. The modified drafts are then sent to the members of the responsible commission – Accreditation Commission or Certification Commission. The drafts are discussed and the commission decides on the final version of the documents. This final version is then sent to the Foundation Board for information and formal decision-making, but not for further in-depth discussion of the content, as the Foundation Board relies on the qualified preparatory work of the other commissions. As discussed during the interviews, evalag considers that student involvement in the Foundation Board would not further enhance the quality of the procedures and guidelines since students have already played an active role beforehand throughout the more crucial stages of drafting.

In practice, students have been involved in the drafting of the guidelines for the new CPD certification activities. The project advisory board of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW discussed the guidelines extensively during its meetings on 28 September 2022 and 26 April 2023. The project advisory board consists of representatives of HEIs, employers' and employees' associations as well as a student member proposed by the Baden-Württemberg State Council. In 2022, evalag organised two online forums to exchange views regarding the guidelines for the four procedures. It invited HEIs in Baden-Württemberg to them, presented its ideas regarding the procedures and asked for feedback. The stakeholders' input was considered for finally drafting the guidelines. As the newly established Certification Commission had just met in April 2023, the drafted guidelines were as an exception presented directly to the Foundation Board on 23 February 2023. The Foundation Board approved them. Afterwards, the guidelines were published on the website.

Regarding the new procedure "Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan)" the AAQ guidelines were adopted by evalag. These guidelines were approved by the commission of AAQ on 27 March 2020. In compliance with the ESG, AAQ involves students in the design and approval of the procedure.

In addition, the ToR established the need to address how does the agency ensure effective involvement of students in the Foundation Board and in their involvement in the design of the processes and criteria for evalag's work outside the German accreditation system, which are in the mandate of the Foundation Board (see Change Report from 14-06-2023) for all evalag's procedures outside the German accreditation system and not only within the newly launched activities.

Evalag's new Statutes came into force in January 2023. The EQA activities outside the German accreditation system (not previously addressed as new activities) were last updated as follows:

- International Institutional Accreditation (1 December 2017 – Foundation Board)
- International Programme Accreditation (1 December 2017 – Foundation Board)
- Audits in Austria (28 October 2022)
- Accreditation in Switzerland
  - o Institutions (February 2021 – AAQ)
- Certification of CPD/offers (February 2023 – Foundation Board)

## **Analysis**

During the site visit, the panel discussed the methodologies and their purposes with experts from the review panels, representatives of the Accreditation Commission, Certification Commission and Foundation Board, higher education institutions and evalag staff. Everyone confirmed that evalag's procedures meet their purpose while highlighting the support given by evalag's staff.

Feedback from every actor involved is collected after each procedure to further improve them and evalag also uses workshops to discuss its methodologies. However, regarding the effective involvement of stakeholders in the design (and further development) of the procedures the panel couldn't see lot of progress since the last review. Formally, students are included in the Accreditation and Certification Commissions and might be included in the Foundation Board, if international standards in the field of study and teaching are dealt with. The panel learnt during the interviews that even if the guidelines are formally approved or adopted by the Foundation Board, the real drafting process is taken on by the Accreditation Commission and will also fall into the responsibility of the new Certification Commission respectively, which both include students. Nevertheless, the panel believes there is still some room for improvement regarding stakeholder involvement in the methodology design and improvement, going beyond adoption by the formal representatives in the Accreditation and Certification Commissions or the Foundation Board, but should rather include active and regular discussions on procedures and methodology in the agency's bodies. The stakeholders and particularly the students could be more actively engaged, having their own space for debate and discussion. evalag could probably contact the students pools the agency works with and seek options for collaboration.

Regarding the specific focus area on how the agency ensures effective involvement of students in the Foundation Board and in their involvement in the design of the processes and criteria for evalag's work outside the German accreditation system, there is little to say. Since the last review, the international accreditations have not been updated; the audits in Austria and the accreditation of institutions in Switzerland have been updated, but they depend on national regulations; and the certification of CPD/offers were discussed, but remained unchanged. Till now the Foundation Board has not used the option to call a student to discuss on any of them.

The panel considers that evalag could benefit from involving the stakeholders in the initial design phase beyond feedback and focus groups on the process quality. The experience achieved during the Hochschulweiterbildung@BWV project could help the agency in this sense.

The panel concludes that evalag complies with the standard even if there are options for improvement.

## **Panel recommendations**

4. The panel recommends for evalag to broaden the active involvement of stakeholders (including the representatives of higher education institutions, employers, and students) in the design of the review methodologies including active and regular discussions on procedures and methodology in the agency's bodies.

## Panel conclusion: compliant

### ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

### ToR – Standards affected by other types of substantive changes

*ESG 2.3: consider the interaction between GAC and evalag, and their respective roles in the follow-up processes (see Change Report from 03-07-2019)*

### Evidence

The panel was provided, through the SAR and its annexes, with the descriptions of the new EQA procedures which are predefined and published. All of them include a similar structure following ESG 2.3 with a self-assessment or equivalent; a site visit, a review report and follow up of the conditions.

evalag has designed four new EQA procedures for CPD certifications:

- Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal and shortened procedures;
- Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal and shortened procedures.

The differences between the normal and the shortened procedures for the certification of CPD institutions and CPD offers are related to the self-assessment and the site-visit.

In the shortened procedures, the agency carries out a criteria-based preliminary examination of various documents submitted by the institution. evalag checks whether the documents provide substantiated information on all criteria. After the preliminary examination of the documents, a meeting between the institution and evalag takes place. This meeting serves for information gathering regarding the criteria in case there is a lack in the documentation provided. Subsequently, the institution may provide further written information in defined time. The outcome of the meeting and the further schedule is documented. If required, the institution prepares a short description according to the specifications of a questionnaire provided by evalag, which is aligned with the certification criteria still to be explicated. The description may include various annexes. The institution submits the documents on the date agreed in the schedule.

During the interviews with evalag staff and HEIs participating in this kind of reviews they explained that there is a SAR, but that it is reduced and that they have to present less documents/evidences than in a normal procedure, due to the fact that the institutions were already system-accredited.

Regarding the site visit, in the shortened procedures, a site visit could be dispensed if the group of experts agrees on this and only on condition that the CPD offers of the institution are already quality-



assured within the framework of the system-accredited quality management system of the HEI. If necessary, an interview with the management of the CPD institution and individual representatives of the HEI on the design of the quality assurance of CPD offers are conducted as a kind of shortened site visit. The specific design (format, duration, and procedure) of the site-visit varies, depending on the specific profile of the CPD offer. The panel learnt that till now both procedures completed included a site visit.

Every procedure leads to a report based on the findings from the self-assessment report and the interviews during the site visit. The report is drafted by the responsible evalag staff members and then finalised by the expert panel. Eventually, the report goes to the higher education institution to be checked for factual errors and then to the Certification Commission for the decision.

The Certification Commission examines the recommendation of the expert group, the report and the comments of the institution, discusses them and states the result. The certification of the CPD institution/offer:

- is possible without recommendations,
- is possible with recommendations,
- or can be rejected.

If conditions are imposed as part of the certification decision of the Certification Commission, these will be reviewed as part of the ongoing procedure according to a defined schedule. The Commission will then make a final decision on whether the conditions are fulfilled.

A follow-up process for considering the action taken by the responsible HEI in terms of non-binding recommendations on quality development is not envisaged so far. Whereas a follow-up process is desirable from a quality assurance perspective, evalag opted against it for the time being to first find out more about the needs and desires of the HEIs offering CPD. This aspect was confirmed during the interviews.

Regarding the accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan) the procedure complies with the corresponding guidelines of the AAQ (Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality assurance). The guidelines provided by evalag are identical with the AAQ guidelines, which were approved by the commission of AAQ on 27 March 2020.

The procedure is predefined and published, with a self-assessment, an external assessment conducted by an international expert team (three persons) including a student member, and a site-visit. The decision of the Swiss Accreditation Council, that decides on the accreditation, is based on the agency's accreditation application, the report of the expert group and a statement by the HEI. The assessment report is to be published. There is no discernible follow-up related to recommendations for quality development foreseen in the procedure.

If requirements must be reviewed within a defined deadline, the agency charges an additional fee. Subsequently, the Swiss Accreditation Council decides whether the requirements are fulfilled.

So far, evalag has not carried out any accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act.

Regarding the focus area linked to the substantive changes related to the changes in the German accreditation system in 2018 there was a shift of responsibility for the follow-up from the agencies to GAC. Although EQAR assigned evalag a continued joint responsibility for the follow-up in 2019, the design of the German accreditation system does not formally "back" this requirement. Rather, only the GAC is obliged to follow up on conditions with the HEIs, whereas evalag is not required or even

desired to play an active role in this process. As explained during the interviews, this applies to all agencies operating in Germany, but GAC.

## **Analysis**

Following the analysis of the SAR and the meetings of the site visit, the panel is convinced that evalag's procedures are well-defined, clear to all relevant stakeholders and useful for these stakeholders. The procedures are implemented and applied in a consistent and transparent way with the support of both the evalag staff members as well as the expert panel members. All review procedures of evalag include a self-assessment report and an external assessment followed by the expert's report, but no follow-up activities, unless related to conditions/requirements established by evalag when taking the corresponding decision. The panel considers that there is a consistent follow up lacking, for example in the case of the CPD certifications the validity period of the certificate is eight years.

The actual implementation of the follow-up within the new German accreditation system was discussed with evalag management and representatives of the GAC. The panel learned that the agency is not in charge of the decision and consequently on the follow-up of conditions. Following the statement of the representative of the German Accreditation Council whom the panel met during the site visit, it will be the German Accreditation Council itself that will be responsible for checking the fulfilment of conditions as part of the follow-up process, but not the recommendations. What happens with the recommendations will only be reviewed upon the re-accreditation of the programme or institution and it will depend on how the institution/programme handles it in its IQAS. The panel considers that eight years (or the time to the next re-accreditation) is too long to observe any meaningful follow up.

Even in the cases where evalag is solely responsible for the review and decision, the focus is exclusively on meeting the conditions. As stated in the guidelines of ESG 2.3, "*External QA does not end with the report by the experts. The report provides clear guidance for institutional action. Agencies have a consistent follow up process for considering the action taken by the institution. The nature of the follow up will depend on the design of the EQA.*" This would bring an opportunity to shift from mere compliance and accountability to enhancement of the programmes and institutions and to give an added value to the external quality assurance processes they own.

The panel believes that the current situation could also foster a shift from quality assurance to quality enhancement in the German accreditation system. The panel is convinced that an agreement with the GAC and the rest of the German agencies regarding the follow up would benefit the whole system. In addition, the panel considers that evalag should implement a follow up of the evaluations they own. The suggestion from the previous review regarding a more structured follow-up, e.g. three years after completing a procedure could be a starting point.

## **Panel recommendations**

5. The panel recommends for evalag to consider the idea of a more structured follow-up, e.g. three years after completing a procedure, for all evaluations which they own.

## **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

6. The panel advises evalag to initiate a dialogue with the GAC and the rest of the German agencies regarding the follow-ups, in particular those beyond formal conditions.

## **Panel conclusion: partially compliant**

## ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

### 2019 review recommendation

#### ENQA 2019

*evalag is recommended to further strengthen the experts' skills by providing training seminars for each type of the review. The agency should seriously consider making such training compulsory for every expert panel member involved in evalag activities.*

#### Evidence

As described in the SAR and annexes, evalag's four new EQA procedures for CPD are all carried out by external experts that include a student member or a participant in representation of a (similar) CPD offer. The groups of experts in all four procedures consist of at least one scientific representation, one professional practice representation and one student or participant representation.

The members of the expert group are selected and appointed by the Certification Commission. evalag informs the institution about the composition of the expert group. In justified cases (due to bias or lack of professional qualifications), the institution has the possibility to object to the nomination of individual reviewers.

Regarding the accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), according to the guidelines of the AAQ, the expert group consists of four people, three experts with scientific and/or professional experience in the field to be accredited and one student member. In the context of international programme accreditation procedures, evalag has already recruited students coming from the students' pool in Switzerland.

All experts are selected thoroughly, considering their previous experience and activities. They are appointed by members of evalag's accreditation commission or, in the case of CPD procedures, by the certification commission. evalag provides a training for experts on a regular basis (online) that is offered to all experts or potential experts. Unfortunately, as confirmed during the interviews, very few people have enrolled for this online training. Nevertheless, evalag confirmed that they will continue to offer this training to experts. Furthermore, experts or potential experts can learn more about each accreditation procedure via videos. evalag provides experts access to these videos which differ between the different types of procedures evalag offers. In addition, project managers brief all experts regarding the criteria and the proceedings for each procedure. Experts also receive this information electronically in the form of a manual. During the interviews, it became clear that the experts and the commissions are very satisfied with the work done by evalag staff regarding briefings and preparation of documentation. The HEIs reviewed are also satisfied with the experts' preparation.

#### Analysis

The analysis of the documents provided and the interviews with the experts, representatives of the Accreditation and Certification Commissions and evalag staff gave the panel a clear idea of the selection procedure of the experts and how evalag makes sure of the adequate composition of the panels.

All panels for new procedures are composed of students, a representative of professional practice and a scientific representative. The panel learned during the interviews that the preparation and briefing for the procedures as carried out by evalag staff was very helpful and ensured a common understanding of the applied criteria.

In addition, evalag provides training options to the experts through several means including videos and handbooks, even if the training is not compulsory. Maybe evalag could reflect on ways to make training opportunities more attractive.

The panel considers that evalag selects experts carefully and offers specific training for interested experts. The panel believes that even if compulsory training could probably further improve the methodological preparation of the panels, the continuous support of evalag and the discussions in the meeting of the panels regarding the methodology and the assessment criteria are enough to have well prepared panels.

### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

7. The panel suggests evalag looking into ways of making the available training opportunities more attractive for the reviewers to attend.

### **Panel conclusion: compliant**

## **ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES**

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

### **ToR – substantive changes**

*ESG 2.5: analyse whether the new arrangements had any impact on the consistency of applying the accreditation criteria (see Change Report from 03-07-2019)*

### **Evidence**

The criteria for evalag's four new EQA procedures for CPD are published in the respective guidelines. The formal decisions of the Certification Commission are based on those published criteria. For each decision, a comprehensive expert report is published that elaborates on the reasons and criteria.

For CPD institutions, the criteria relate to the objectives and the profile of the institution, governance, resources, teaching and learning, and quality assurance. For CPD offers, the criteria relate to the profile of the CPD offer, the curriculum, examinations, the organisation of the CPD offer, resources, and quality assurance.

As described in the SAR and confirmed during the interviews with evalag's staff and experts, the agency's project manager ensures that the criteria are applied consistently through all the steps of the procedure.

Before the final report is submitted to the Certification Commission, the HEI is given the opportunity to comment on the report as well as amending it regarding factual accuracy. The evalag project

manager in charge as well as the participating experts ensure that the report is written according to the criteria in a clear and precise manner.

Regarding accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), the criteria are published in the AAQ guidelines and correspond to the legal requirements. The formal decisions of the Swiss Accreditation Council are based on those published criteria. Evalag applies the predefined criteria and ensures the consistency in the same way as in the rest of their procedures.

The ToR also requested to address whether the new arrangements in the German accreditation system had any impact on the consistency of applying the accreditation criteria. In 2018, the German Accreditation System was fundamentally reformed. The Interstate Treaty on the organisation of a joint accreditation system to ensure the quality of teaching and learning at German HEIs came into force on 1 January 2018. It established a new legal basis for the accreditation system in Germany, following the resolution of the Federal Constitutional Court on 17 February 2016. The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs afterwards agreed on the corresponding Specimen Decree.

Since then, only the GAC is eligible to decide about the accreditation of study programmes and about institutional accreditation (system accreditation in Germany). HEIs apply directly and in their own responsibility for accreditation to the GAC. Therefore, the agencies' roles are now limited to the coordination of the assessment procedure that precedes any accreditation procedure by GAC.

This reformed accreditation system is now running for five years. All involved agencies and the GAC strive for a coherent application of the criteria. Therefore, for Programme assessment procedures and Institutional assessment procedures evalag thoroughly applies the criteria of the Specimen Decree and respects the GAC's related interpretations.

When HEIs apply for an accreditation procedure at the GAC, there is a standard form to submit that documents the outcomes of the completed assessment procedure. Applications not complying with the standard form are not eligible for accreditation.

Currently, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs is revising the Specimen Decree. A stakeholder consultation preceding this review was launched. evalag participated in the feedback that the agencies drafted for this purpose.

## **Analysis**

evalag's criteria for each of their procedures are published and easily accessible on its website. evalag staff supports the HEIs, the experts and the commissions through all the steps of the assessment procedures to ensure the consistency of the application of its criteria. There is a clear communication with the institutions regarding the methodology and the assessment criteria. It was highlighted during the interviews how easily accessible evalag staff is to answer any question. The experts and representatives of the Accreditation and Certification Commissions also confirmed that they felt very supported by evalag to do their tasks.

The panel learned about the high level of satisfaction of the institutions and experts or members of commissions regarding the work done by evalag in all their procedures and the support offered to all of them.

## **Panel commendations**

8. The panel commends the agency for supporting efficiently all the involved stakeholders through the entire review procedure.

## Panel conclusion: compliant

### ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

### ToR substantial changes

*ESG 2.6: analyse how evalag ensures that its final reports are also published if the institution does not forward the report to GAC (see Change Report from 03-07-2019)*

### Evidence

The report compilation process for every type of procedure the agency carries out is the same regardless of the type of procedure evalag performs. The reports are drafted by evalag's staff, but as confirmed by evalag's experts during the interviews, the expert panel members are involved in the report compilation process. evalag panel members comment on the draft reports and change the content if necessary, before the report is forwarded to the decision-making body for a decision. All reports are published in an online database on evalag's website.

For evalag's four new CPD certification procedures, reports and related decisions will be published in the database on the evalag website as well as in DEQAR. The first two positive certification decisions of the Certification Commission were made on 12 July 2023 and are published together with the reports.

Regarding the accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), following the decision of the Swiss Accreditation Council, evalag, as the responsible agency, will publish the report and the associated decision in the evalag database and in DEQAR. So far, no Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan) has been carried out by evalag.

Finally, with regards to publishing of reports not forwarded to GA, currently in Germany, evalag prepares reports on behalf of HEIs for Programme assessment procedures and Institutional assessment procedures. When it submits the final report to the HEI, it is up to the HEI to submit it to the GAC. evalag publishes the report in its database on the website, regardless if the HEI submitted the report to the GAC.

### Analysis

The panel confirms that regarding the new procedures, evalag respects all requirements of ESG standard 2.6. The only two procedures completed regarding CPD certifications are available on evalag's website. So far, no Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan) has been carried out by evalag.

In case of programme accreditations in Germany, as stated in the SAR and confirmed during the interviews, evalag has no lever to enforce the submission of the report to the GAC, but it does fulfil its reporting obligations by publishing the reports on its website and in the DEQAR register, regardless if the institution has applied for accreditation to the GAC or not.

## Panel conclusion: compliant

### ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

#### 2019 review recommendation

##### ENQA 2019

*evalag is recommended to reconsider the complaints and appeals policy with a view to making the document shorter and clearer. The document should clarify what is meant by the terms ‘complaints’ and ‘appeals.’ The panel also recommends evalag to ensure that the policy is clearly accessible on the website in German and English.*

##### Evidence

The SAR describes how the Complaints Commission consists of four members with voting rights, one representative of an institution concerned with quality assurance in higher education, one representative of another domestic accreditation agency and one representative of a foreign accreditation agency, as well as one student representative.

While the SAR was being drafted the Complaints and Appeals Procedure in place was the one adopted by the Foundation Board in 4 May 2018. As new activities have been introduced, like the certification procedures of CPD and the Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan), the Complaints and Appeals Procedure needed to be updated. The new one was officially adopted at the meeting of the Foundation Board on 10 November 2023 and was sent to the panel and it is currently published and accessible on the website in German and English. The document includes the option to file complaints and/or appeals for all the external assurance activities of evalag. Accordingly, the procedures of CPD have an explicit reference to the Complaints Commission and the procedure to file objections “*The CPD institution may submit an objection against the certification decision within four weeks. A written statement of reasons for the objection must be submitted to the evalag office within six weeks of notification of the certification decision. Objections must refer to the fact that the certification decision does not comply with evalag's procedural principles for the certification of CPD institutions. The Complaints Commission assesses formal objections to decisions.*”

As stated during the interviews, up to now there have been no appeals and complaints related to the certification of CPD, and there is no activity yet regarding the Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan). As explained during the site visit, if there would be any, evalag would deal with them appropriately according to the procedure.

Nevertheless, it seems to be a semantic mistake either in English and German regarding the use of both terms in the document. Regarding the recommendation from the previous review, the document doesn't clarify what is meant by the terms “complaints” and “appeals”.

## **Analysis**

The Complaints and Appeals Policy is easily accessible on the agency's website in English and German. The updated version of the document was adopted by the Foundation Board on its meeting of 10 November 2023.

The agency's policy on the appeals and complaints is detailed and covers the various potential causes for a complaint or an appeal. However, the Statutes describe the Complaints Commissions' tasks and use the term "objections to the decisions" which would mean "appeals" in the understanding of the ESG. It seems that at least in the English version of the documents there is random use of the terms.

The panel is not particularly concerned about the procedure as no complaints or appeals have been filed since the last review and the close communication with the HEIs during the whole process makes it easy to solve any issue in an informal way. Nevertheless, it would be good to review all the documents where there is a reference to the "Complaints Commission" and the "Complaints and Appeals Policy" to clarify the terms "complaints" and "appeals".

### **Panel recommendations**

9. The panel recommends evalag to clarify what is meant by the terms "complaints" and "appeals" in all its documents, including the name of the "Complaints Commission".

**Panel conclusion: compliant**



# ENHANCEMENT AREAS

## ESG 2.2

ESG standard 2.2 requests stakeholder involvement when designing standards for external quality assurance. As previously addressed at ESG 2.2, in the 2019 review evalag only complied partially with the standard due to the lack of student involvement in the Foundation Board. Moreover, the panel recommended to broaden the effective involvement of stakeholders. Even if formally, there is an involvement of stakeholders in the agency's bodies and feedback is provided after each of the activities developed. However, the review panel considers there are options for improvement and that there have not been lots of progress since the last review. Notwithstanding the fact that this has already been addressed under the review of ESG 2.2 regarding the focus areas of the previous review and the new activities, the panel had a specific meeting with evalag staff regarding ESG 2.2 with a specific focus on the work concerning Continual Professional Development in Higher Education in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg and the challenges it faces in this context.

Due to the growing importance of the CPD offer, evalag decided to participate in the tender for the Hochschulweiterbildung@BW project of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg in 2021. evalag was awarded the contract and since March 2022 is part of the project, led by University of Freiburg. evalag has built on its proven experience with certification procedures for CPD at HEIs since 2015 and nine project managers of evalag are involved in this project. The assessment procedures are free of charge for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg until the end of 2024 (due to public funding from the project) and evalag expects a high workload in the upcoming months with several procedures running. In addition, there might be a high demand from HEIs in other federal states, but this is still unclear which the future might be once the project ends, although it might be a good option to diversify external quality assurance activities and evalag is in a very relevant position as it is a first mover in this CPD review context.

evalag has opted for two closely connected subtypes of the two procedures for CPD institutions and CPD offers: the normal and – if there is a valid institutional accreditation (system accreditation) of the HEI– a shortened procedure. The panel learned that this is a tailor-made procedural approach so the institutions or CPD offers can choose what fits them best to avoid additional burden in their external reviews.

evalag staff explained that they have some doubts regarding how to better communicate the new procedure and how to involve the stakeholders. For evalag team the project itself is a great learning experience regarding new forms of communication, planning, project management, also with external partners, benefiting from it in the future. The panel believes that evalag has a very good opportunity to build on the lessons learnt from the project, not only to involve all stakeholders from the design phase of the procedure, but also to take advantage of the contacts made to better communicate the outcomes and the added value. The last conference of the project might be a platform in this sense.

In addition, as recommended at ESG 3.1. evalag should start mapping its relevant stakeholders more strategically. The panel found a rather limited or restricted understanding of stakeholders: evalag's focus is mainly on the HEIs, and then, when it comes to CPD, on the Ministry. Therefore, the issue is not so much the processes of involvement, but whom evalag actually considers to be relevant. Particularly, in the case of CPDs, which bring HEIs into competition with alternative providers, the labour market should have questions and concerns as could be the case of the big labour and economic associations.... The panel considers that evalag should broaden its view of stakeholders and take a more proactive/strategic approach. This concerns the CPD, most of all, but, to a smaller degree is also relevant when it comes to other procedures. The panel believes that evalag might not be realising the risks and opportunities, if evalag does not open up.

Finally, the panel would like to highlight that the tailor-made approach is a positive move for the institutions trying to reduce the burden of the external quality assurance activities providing the option of shortened procedures if the requirements are met. However, evalag should carefully analyse the workload at the agency side as this could mean that evalag staff and experts might be overloaded so it will be important to keep the balance while trying to facilitate the institutions' work.

### ESG 3.5

Evalag suggested a second enhancement standard, in this case ESG 3.5 Resources focusing on the human resources. As described in the section regarding changes in the agency, evalag has undergone some important changes since the last review due to a change to dual leadership in the management and the need of a new human resources strategy for evalag (in progress).

Their main concerns are how to make the position of a project manager at evalag appealing so staff wants to stay and how to enhance the working environment so they can attract new staff/maintain the current staff, more specifically focusing on (a) the design of resource-efficient and employee-friendly work processes, (b) ensuring team spirit and cohesion despite remote work, (c) support for employees.

After all the interviews, the panel considers that evalag is a great place to work at and the team is infused with great team spirit and professionalism. The panel appreciate a lot how evalag is acutely aware of the importance of its human and intellectual capital, really putting a lot of time, thought and effort into staff recruitment and retention, understanding the value of professionalism and expertise in a knowledge economy. There is a great concern for staff wellbeing at the leadership level and a strong dialogue culture throughout the agency.

Evalag has already started with some initiatives which might further support their objectives regarding talent retention as the team retreat, trainings (internal and external), options to change from one department to the other or to participate in projects in addition to their regular accreditation/certification activities, new premises (2024), remote working...Some others like the appraisal interview system need to be further developed (already defined as an implementation measure in the new evalag strategy, not yet approved by the Foundation Board).

The new management software will facilitate the distribution of tasks. This will have two benefits, to have a more balanced distribution of tasks and facilitating the decision-making process regarding which projects to accept.

The team has very different profiles from very experienced staff to very new ones. This also gives opportunities for learning from each other as with the digitalisation project and there can be challenges as knowledge gaps might happen. In order to avoid this evalag should make sure from a structural point of view that the knowledge is managed. In this sense, finding options to meet and consolidate the team while maintaining remote-working might still be a challenge.

The work-in-progress version of the new evalag strategy (not approved by the Foundation Board yet) shows that the perspective of the human resources is appropriately taken into account and strategic objectives as well as implementation measures for this perspective are defined, which are suitable for the overarching purposes and for the enhancement which evalag wants to reach. Crucial for the long-term binding of employees seems to be the second strategic objective identified by evalag for this perspective, concerning staff development (once they are at evalag), including structured CPD and yearly appraisal interviews. Together with other measures described in the current draft of the overarching strategy (e.g. more visibility of people and their individual competences on the organisational website), they seem to be suitable for the challenges to be addressed, if approached in a structured, systematic, and very well integrated way (not only from an administrative point of view, but with intertwining contents, methods, etc).

Two of the aspects addressed during the site visit could get stronger and more explicit attention by evalag in relation to staff selection, development and retention:

- On the one hand, there is obviously the need for a more structured and systematic approach to knowledge management inside the team, this could be a nice opportunity to develop roles and profiles further, make competences more formally visible, etc., maybe opening new ways for a different kind of “career progression”.
- On the other hand, the leading team underscored several times how important it is to recruit people with the “right” mindset, sharing the same understanding and quality of culture as evalag wants to embody. The other way round, it would be very important to try and make this understanding, mindset and culture explicit, providing a framework and orientation for staff, at the premises and mobile working.

# CONCLUSION

## SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

1. The panel commends evalag on their excellent reputation among HEIs in the region.
2. The panel commends the agency for supporting efficiently all the involved stakeholders through the entire review procedure.

## OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The panel recommends mapping evalag's relevant stakeholders more strategically and finding ways of involving them effectively and innovatively rather than ritually. This specifically includes students, whose involvement in governance even after the recent amendment is formal rather than actual.
2. The panel recommends searching ways to communicate evalag's entire quality processes, including its mission statement and quality policy and/or objectives, to the wider public more effectively and more clearly.
3. The panel recommends resuming the work on thematic analysis, which was abandoned after 2018, particularly in light of the severe changes in the "German system".
4. The panel recommends for evalag to broaden the active involvement of stakeholders (including the representatives of higher education institutions, employers, and students) in the design of the review methodologies including active and regular discussions on procedures and methodology in the agency's bodies.
5. The panel recommends for evalag to consider the idea of a more structured follow-up, e.g. three years after completing a procedure, for all evaluations which they own.
6. The panel recommends evalag to clarify what is meant by the terms "complaints" and "appeals" in all its documents, including the name of the "Complaints Commission".

In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, evalag is in compliance with the ESG.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT

1. The panel suggests collaboration with other agencies nationally or internationally in areas where evalag is working within the same regulatory framework.
2. The panel suggest building on the suggestion from the 2019 review "to expand the scope of thematic analyses by focusing on best practices and recommendations, e.g. as evolving from the follow-up of its QA procedures".
3. The panel advises evalag to initiate a dialogue with the GAC and the rest of the German agencies regarding the follow-ups, in particular those beyond formal conditions.
4. The panel suggests evalag looking into ways of making the available training opportunities more attractive for the reviewers to attend.

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX I: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	
15.11.2023 - Online meeting with the agency's resource person				
1	120 min	Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for site visit		
2	90 min	An online clarifications meeting with the agency's resource person to clarify the agency's changes since the last full review against the ESG and to understand the background and motive of the agency's choice of the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (next to the overall HE and QA context of the agency)		
[21.11.2023] – Day I				
3	90 min	Review panel's pre-visit meeting and preparations		
4	45 min	Meeting with the CEO and the Chair of the Board	CEOs and Chair of the Foundation Board	
	15 min	Review panel's private discussion		
5	45 min	Meeting with representatives from the Senior Management Team		
	15 min	Review panel's private discussion		

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	
6	45 min	Meeting with the agency staff/representatives on the agency's self-selected enhancement area (as necessary)		
	45 min	Lunch (panel only)		
7	60 min	Meeting with key staff of the agency/staff in charge of external QA activities		
	15 min	Review panel's private discussion		
8	45 min	Meeting with department/key body of the agency (accreditation commission and certification commission)	Two members of the certification commission and one member of the accreditation commission	
	15 min	Review panel's private discussion		
9	45 min	Meeting with ministry representatives	Representative of the Ministry of Science, Research and Arts Baden-Württemberg	
10	60 min	Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day 2		
		Dinner (panel only)		
[22.11.2023] – Day 2				
	30 min	Review panel's private meeting		

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
11	45 min	Meeting with heads of some reviewed HEIs/ HEI representatives	<p>Prorector, State University of Music and the Performing Arts Stuttgart</p> <p>Vice President, Conservatory /University of Music Lübeck</p> <p>Rector, University of Applied Sciences of the Deutsche Bundesbank</p> <p>Prorector, University of Applied Sciences Offenburg</p> <p>CEO, School of Advanced Professional Studies Ulm</p>
	15 min	Review panel's private discussion	
12	45 min	Meeting with quality assurance officers of HEIs	<p>University of Applied Sciences Pforzheim</p> <p>University of Kiel</p> <p>University of Applied Sciences Graubünden, (Switzerland)</p> <p>University of Applied Sciences Aalen</p>
	15 min	Review panel's private discussion	

SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	
13	45 min	Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool	<p>Professor, University of Applied Sciences Joanneum, Austria</p> <p>Professor, University of Mainz</p> <p>Professor, University of Hohenheim</p> <p>Professor, Coburg University of Applied Sciences and Arts</p> <p>Professor, University/School of Music Detmold</p> <p>Professor, University of Applied Sciences Augsburg</p> <p>Professor, University of Applied Sciences Bielefeld</p>	
	60 min	Lunch (panel only)		
14	45 min	Meeting with stakeholders, such as employers, students, local community	<p>Student at RWTH Aachen</p> <p>acatech – National academy for Science and Engineering</p> <p>German Rectors Conference, Professor and President, University of Applied Science</p>	



SESSION NO.	TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW	
			Trier, member of the evalag Foundation Board Student at ZHAW School of Engineering, Switzerland Student JKU Linz, Austria	
	15 min	Review panel's private discussion		
15	45 min	Meeting with representatives of the GAC	CEO and Head of Legal and International Affairs	
	60 min	Meeting among panel members to agree on final issues to clarify		
16	45 min	A session to further investigate additional topics that may arise during the site visit regarding agency's compliance with the ESG (as necessary) / Meeting with CEO to clarify any pending issues	evalag CEOs	
18	90 min	Private meeting between panel members to agree on the main findings		
19	30 min	Final de-briefing meeting with staff and Board members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings		
		Dinner (panel only)		

## ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

# Targeted review of Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg (evalag) against the ESG

# Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The present Terms of Reference were agreed between evalag (applicant), ENQA (coordinator) and EQAR.

## 1. Background

Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg-evalag has been registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since 2009 and is applying for renewal of EQAR registration based on a targeted external review against *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* coordinated by The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg-evalag has been a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2001 and is applying for renewal of ENQA membership.

evalag is carrying out the following activities within the scope of the ESG:

- Programme assessment procedures<sup>1</sup>
- Institutional assessment procedures<sup>2</sup>
- International Programme Accreditation
- International Institutional Accreditation
- Audits of quality management in Austria
- Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to HEEdA and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan)<sup>3</sup>
- Institutional Accreditation of Swiss Higher Education Institutions
- Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development (CPD)
- Certification of Continual Professional Development (CPD) offers of HEIs

---

<sup>1</sup> Programme Accreditation in Germany (as listed in EQAR/DEQAR)

<sup>2</sup> System Accreditation in Germany

<sup>3</sup> Newly reported activity. [See Change Report Decision from 14 June 2023](#)

- Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal procedure<sup>4</sup>
- Certification for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shorten procedure<sup>5</sup>
- Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) - normal procedure<sup>6</sup>
- Certification for CPD offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) - shorten procedure<sup>7</sup>

All these activities will be included on the agency's profile on the EQAR website and linked to DEQAR database. NB: The agency may not upload reports from other activities to DEQAR.

The following activities of the applicant are outside the scope of the ESG:

- Consultancy
- Peer-review based assessments of grant proposals
- Projects for the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts (MWK)
- Evaluation (outside the ESG)
- Cooperation and Research (ERASMUS+ projects)

While these activities are not relevant to the application for renewal on EQAR, it is evalag's choice – in agreement with the review coordinator – whether those activities should be commented upon by the review panel.

## 2. Purpose and scope of the targeted review

This review will evaluate the extent to which evalag continues to fulfil the requirements of the ESG. The targeted review aims to place more focus on those parts that require attention and provide sufficient information to support evalag's application to EQAR.

The review will be further used as part of the agency's renewal of membership in ENQA.

---

<sup>4</sup> Newly reported activity. [See Change Report Decision from 14 June 2023](#)

<sup>5</sup> Newly reported activity. [See Change Report Decision from 14 June 2023](#)

<sup>6</sup> Newly reported activity. [See Change Report Decision from 14 June 2023](#)

<sup>7</sup> Newly reported activity. [See Change Report Decision from 14 June 2023](#)

## 2.1 Focus areas

- A) Standards with a partial compliance conclusion in the Register Committee's last renewal decision:
- a. ESG 2.2 – Designing methodologies fit for purpose
    - Consider how does the agency ensure effective involvement of students in the Foundation Board and in their involvement in the design of the processes and criteria for evalag's work outside the German accreditation system, which are in the mandate of the Foundation Board (see [Change Report from 14-06-2023](#));
    - This standard should be addressed for all evalag's procedure outside the German accreditation system and not only within the newly launched activities.
  - b. ESG 3.1 – Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance;
    - Address whether evalag has a clear overarching strategy that brings together planing, budgeting and risk assessment;
    - Consider the level of effective student involvement in the Foundation Board of evalag ([see Change Report from 14-06-2023](#))
- B) Standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the following activities (see [Change Report from 14-06-2023](#)):
- a. Certification for Institutions of Higher Education offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal procedure;
  - b. Certification for Institutions of Higher Education offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shorten procedure;
  - c. Certification for Continual Professional Development Offers of Higher Education Institutions with-in the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – normal procedure;
  - d. Certification for Continual Professional Development Offers of Higher Education Institutions with-in the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW (only for HEIs in Baden-Württemberg) – shorten procedure;
  - e. *Accreditation of study programmes pursuant to the Higher Education Act (HEdA) and Swiss Health Professions Act (GesBG/LPSan).*

- C) Standards affected by other types of substantive changes:
- a. ESG 2.3: consider the interaction between GAC and evalag, and their respective roles in the follow-up processes (see [Change Report from 03-07-2019](#));
  - b. ESG 2.5: analyse whether the new arrangements had any impact on the consistency of applying the accreditation criteria (see [Change Report from 03-07-2019](#));
  - c. ESG 2.6: analyse how evalag ensures that its final reports are also published if the institution does not forward the report to GAC (see [Change Report from 03-07-2019](#));
  - d. ESG 3.3:
    - i. Address the organisational change in light of the statutory change from 29 July 2021 leading to dual leadership effective as of 1 February 2022 (see [Change Report from 08-11-2022](#));
    - ii. Address the organisational change in light of the statutory change from 28 January 2023 leading to establishing of Certification Commission (see [Change Report from 14-06-2023](#)).

D) ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance;

E) Selected enhancement area: ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose, ESG 3.5 Resources

F) Other matters regarding ESG compliance that come up during the targeted review and that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG (if any).

These issues should be investigated by the review panel as far as possible, providing an analysis and conclusion on the ESG standard(s) concerned.

### 3. The review process

The review will be conducted in line with the requirements of *the EQAR Procedures for Applications* and *the Policy on Targeted Reviews*, and following the methodology described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Agreement on the Terms of Reference between EQAR, evalag and The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA);
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel by The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA);
- Self-assessment by evalag including the preparation and publication of a self-assessment report;

- A site visit by the review panel to evalag;
- Preparation and completion of the final review report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final review report by ENQA's Agency Review Committee;
- Analysis of the final review report and decision-making by the EQAR Register Committee;
- Decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board;
- Attendance to the online follow-up seminar.

### **3.1 Independence of the review coordinator**

The coordinator has not provided remunerated (e.g. consultancy) or unremunerated services to evalag during the past 5 years, and conversely evalag has not provided any remunerated or unremunerated services to the coordinator.

### **3.2 Nomination and appointment of the review team members**

The review panel consists of at four members including an academic employed by a higher education institution, a student member and one other expert. At least two members are from another country.

At least one panel member should be a quality assurance professional that is currently employed by a QA agency and has been engaged in quality assurance within the past five years. When requested by the agency under review or when considered particularly pertinent, other stakeholders (for example, a representative of the labour market) may be included. In this case, an additional fee is charged to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses.

One of the members serves as the chair of the review panel, and one as the review secretary. 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. At least two panel members come from outside the national system of the agency under review (if relevant).

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.

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.

Once appointed, the coordinator will inform EQAR about the appointed panel members.

### **3.3 Self-assessment by evalag, including the preparation of a self-assessment report**

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

- Self-assessment includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;

The self-assessment report is expected to contain:

- a description of the self-assessment process and the production of the SAR;
- a description of changes occurred within the agency since the last full review, including any eventual changes in the higher education system and quality assurance system in which the agency predominantly operates, the agency's structure, funding, its list of external quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG, as well as the changes in the agency's quality assurance activities abroad (where relevant);
- a section that addresses the focus areas of the review, including standards that were considered to be partially compliant with the ESG in the last full review as well as ESG 2.1 and one self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (see 2.1 Focus areas);
- a SWOT analysis of the agency as a whole;
- for each of the individual standards enlisted above (see section 2) a consideration of how the agency has addressed the recommendations as noted in the previous EQAR Register Committee decision of inclusion/renewal (if applicable).

The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which evalag fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and continues to meet the ESG and thus the requirements for EQAR registration.

The self-assessment report is submitted to the review coordinator, 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 coordinator will not judge the content of information itself but rather whether or not the necessary information, as outlined in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted 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.

### **3.4 A site visit by the review panel**

The review panel will draft a proposal of the site visit schedule considering the aspects included under the focus area (as defined under point 2.1 of the Terms of Reference).

The schedule will include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit. The approved schedule shall be given to evalag at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The site visit should enable the review panel to explore how the agency has addressed the standards where it has been found to be partially compliant (if the case), aspects of substantive change, consideration of internal quality assurance (ESG 2.1) and the self-selected ESG standard(s) for enhancement. The panel will include extra time during the site-visit to address any other arising issues (if the case) that might have an impact on the agency's compliance with the ESG.

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

Prior to the physical site visit, the panel attends a joint briefing call between the panel, ENQA and EQAR to clarify the review expectations and address any possible arising matters.

In advance of the site visit (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.

### **3.5 Preparation and completion of the final review report**

The review report will be drafted in consultation with all review panel members and correspond to the purpose and scope of the review as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. In particular, it will provide a clear rationale for its findings concerning each ESG. When preparing the report, the review panel should bear in mind the *EQAR Policy*



*on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG* to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR<sup>8</sup>.

The external report will present the facts and analysis reflecting the reality at the time of review. This will form the main basis for the Register Committee's decision making.

A draft will first be submitted to the ENQA Review Coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity, and language. After panel has considered coordinator's feedback, the report will go to the agency for comment on factual accuracy. If evalag chooses to provide a position 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 evalag and submit the document for scrutiny to ENQA's Agency Review Committee and then to EQAR along with the remaining application documents (self-evaluation report, Declaration of Honour, statement to review report-if applicable). The report is to be finalised normally within 2-4 months of the site visit and will normally not exceed 30 pages in length. All panel will sign off on the final version of the external review report. The coordinator will provide to evalag the [Declaration of Honour](#) together with the final report.

#### **4. Publication and use of the report**

evalag will receive the expert panel's report and publish it on its website once the ENQA Agency Review Committee has validated the report. Prior to the final validation of the report, the ENQA Agency Review Committee may 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. The report will also be published on the EQAR website together with the decision on registration, regardless of the outcome.

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. 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.

#### **5. Decision-making on EQAR registration and ENQA membership**

The agency will submit the review report via email to EQAR before expiry of the agency's registration on EQAR. The agency will also include its self-assessment

---

<sup>8</sup> See here: <https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/UseAndInterpretationOfTheESGv2.0-2015.pdf>

report (in a PDF format), the Declaration of Honour and any other relevant documents to the application to EQAR (i.e. annexes, statement to the review report).

EQAR is expected to consider the review report and the agency's application at its Register Committee meeting in (summer, 2024). The Register Committee's final judgement on the agency's compliance with the ESG as a whole can either be substantially compliant (approval of the application) or not substantially compliant (rejection of the application). In case of a positive decision (substantially compliant with the ESG), the registration is renewed for a further five years (from the date of the review report).

The decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board will take place after EQAR Register Committee decision.

To apply for ENQA membership, the agency is 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.

## 6. Indicative schedule of the review

Agreement on Terms of Reference	July 2023
Appointment of review panel members	July 2023
Self-assessment report (SAR) completed by evalag	August 2023
Screening of SAR by ENQA Review Coordinator	September 2023
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	September 2023
Briefing of review panel members	October 2023
Review panel site visit	November 2023
Submission of the draft review report to ENQA Review Coordinator	January 2024
Factual check of the review report by the evalag	February 2024
Statement of evalag to review panel (if applicable)	February 2024
Submission of review report to ENQA	February 2024
Validation of the review report by the Agency Review Committee	April 2024

EQAR Register Committee meeting and decision on the application by evalag	Summer 2024
Decision on ENQA membership by the ENQA Board	September 2024

### ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

CPD	Continual Professional Development
AAQ	Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance
DEQAR	Database of External Quality Assurance Results
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	<i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015</i>
GAC	German Accreditation Council
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
IQAS	Internal quality assurance system
MWK	Ministry of Science, Research and Arts of Baden - Württemberg
QA	quality assurance
SAC	Swiss Accreditation Council
SAR	Self-assessment report
ToR	Tripartite Terms of Reference

## ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

### DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY EVALAG

Statutes of the evalag (Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg) Foundation (valid from 28 January 2023)

Certification Guidelines for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – normal procedure

Certification Guidelines for Institutions of HEIs offering Continual Professional Development within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW – shortened procedure

Certification Guidelines for Continual Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW– normal procedure

Certification Guidelines for Continual Professional Development Offers of HEIs within the framework of Hochschulweiterbildung@BW– shortened procedure

Analysis of stakeholder feedback 2022

New Complaints and Appeals procedure – November 2023

Draft of new strategy – November 2023

### OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL

evalag webpage

## ENQA TARGETED REVIEW 2024

THIS REPORT presents findings of the ENQA Targeted Review of the Evaluation Agency of Baden-Württemberg (evalag), undertaken in 2023.

**enqa.**

European Association for  
Quality Assurance in Higher Education