
President Michel Cosnard
High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES)
2-8 rue Albert Einstein
75013 Paris, France

Dublin, 3 March 2017

Subject: Reconfirmation of membership of HCERES in ENQA

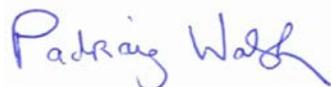
Dear Mr. Cosnard,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 13-14 February 2017, the Board of ENQA agreed that HCERES met the necessary requirements for reconfirmation of ENQA Membership for five years from that date.

The ENQA Board concluded that HCERES is in substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the Board would like to receive a follow-up report on the recommendations in the panel report (as outlined in the annex attached) within two years of its decision, i.e. by February 2019. The Board would like to give specific attention to ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts: HCERES is strongly encouraged involve students in all of its quality assurance processes.

In addition, the Board recommends that you consider availing of the new ENQA procedure, i.e. a progress visit. The visit would take place after the submission of the follow-up report, in about two years' time from this decision. The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with you in about a year's time to discuss this possibility. The costs of this visit have already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable except for the travel costs of the experts. More information about the progress visit can be found in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat. Please accept my congratulations for the re-confirmation of membership of HCERES.

Yours sincerely,



Padraig Walsh
President

Annex: Areas for development

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ESG 3.3

HCERES is recommended to consider further developing its procedure for non-conflict of interest, in order to help easily detect and prevent potential conflicts of interests. This may be achieved by including in the expert's declaration of interests explicit definition of a conflict of interest in the context of the agency work. In addition, panels' independence can be reinforced by providing a written guidance on what may constitute a conflict of interest in evaluator's work, how it can be detected and avoided, including examples from the agency's practice.

ESG 3.4

HCERES is recommended to better utilise information gathered from institutional and programme evaluations, in order to show the progress and problems encountered by higher education institutions and reinforce the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes through the publication of regular analytical reports.

ESG 3.5

HCERES could revise the roles and responsibilities attached to scientific delegates in order to curtail the cost of universities' contribution to external quality assurance.

ESG 3.6

HCERES is recommended to publish its internal quality assurance policy on the website. HCERES is recommended to avoid changing the methodology every year, and to consolidate various internal quality assurance tools, both common and specific, into a single Handbook.

ESG 3.7

The agency is recommended to regard more constructively external periodic reviews and use their findings to reflect on its policies and activities.

ESG 2.1

HCERES should further review and revise its external quality assurance processes and the various standards and criteria used for them, in order to fully address the requirements of ESG Part 1. This particularly concerns external quality assurance of programme design and approval and the development of teaching staff.

HCERES should revise the complex structure, definitions, the language and style of its quality assurance standards and criteria with a view of providing clarity and consistency of approach.

The agency is advised to revise its processes and standards for evaluation of cross-border and foreign higher education, considering the Toolkit on quality assurance of CBHE for agencies and HEIs and the agreed standards for quality assurance of joint programmes, approved by EHEA Ministers in May, 2015.

ESG 2.2

HCERES is encouraged to open up to external stakeholders by systematically involving them into the assessment and design of its methodologies through various working groups and committees.

ESG 2.3

HCERES should encourage institutions to follow-up its panels' recommendations by including options for follow-up of recommendations in evaluation reports.

HCERES should consider revising its flexible approach to the selection of standards for self-evaluation to ensure comparability and consistency of its published reports.

ESG 2.4

HCERES is encouraged to publish on the website the agency's policy and criteria for nomination and appointment of experts.

The agency should consider active involvement of international experts in review panels by developing and implementing consistent approach to their selection and recruitment, including for the evaluations abroad.

HCERES should involve students and employer representatives in the panels for all types of evaluations and strengthen their role as equal members, and ensuring proper and regular training.

ESG 2.5

HCERES is recommended to refine outcomes' criteria for different evaluations, in order to ensure consistency in their application by different panels and institutions.

ESG 2.7

HCERES is encouraged to coordinate its complaints procedure with accrediting and contracting ministries, in order to promote coherent approach to complaints and appeals; HCERES is recommended to launch the work its complaints committee as soon as possible in order to be able to take account of the adequacy and effectiveness of its new methodology.