

External Review of the Agence pour l'Évaluation de la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur organisé ou subventionné par la Communauté française (AEQES) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

## **Annex 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

November 2010

### **1. Background and Context**

AEQES was founded in November 2002 and it started its first external evaluations of curricula in 2004. AEQES is publicly funded and it is the only agency officially recognised in the French community of Belgium. It is responsible for the external evaluation of study programmes of higher education, more precisely for Bachelor and Master programmes provided by the publicly funded institutions of the French community. Higher education institutions can be universities, "haute écoles" (non-university HEIs), art academies and conservatories as well as adult learning institutions. When similar study programmes are provided – even by different types of HE institutions –, a cluster approach is developed and the external evaluations are conducted simultaneously.

In February 2008, a new legislation implied changes in AEQES' organisation and procedures. In its website, AEQES now publishes the reports written by the experts for each external evaluation per institution and an overview of the assessed curricula.

AEQES is not involved in accreditation procedures, its legal frame and vision aim at developing quality culture stimulating co-operation among HEI's, and at disseminating good practices.

### **2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation**

This is a type A review, as defined in the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*. It will evaluate the way in which and to what extent AEQES fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will also



provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether AEQES should be granted Full Membership of ENQA. The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting AEQES Full Membership in ENQA.

In addition to analysing AEQES compliance with the ENQA membership criteria, and thus with the ESG, the review aims to give background information on the context of AEQES's operation, role and tasks.

### **3. The Review Process**

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

The evaluation procedure will consist of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-evaluation by AEQES including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the review panel to AEQES;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the Review Committee of the ENQA Board;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency.

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

The review panel will normally consist of five members: four external reviewers (one or two quality assurance experts, representative(s) of higher education institutions, student member) and a review secretary. Three of the reviewers (including the review secretary) will be nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the national agencies, and will normally be drawn from senior serving members of Board/Council or staff of ENQA member agencies. The fourth external reviewer will be drawn from a nomination



provided either by the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). The nomination of the student member will be asked from the European Students' Union (ESU). One of the panel members will serve as the chair of the review.

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

ENQA will provide to AEQES the list of suggested experts with their respective curricula vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the AEQES review.

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

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

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

### 3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

The review panel will draw up and publish a schedule of the site visit. AEQES shall be given at least one month's notice of the site visit schedule in order to properly organise the requested interviews. 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 duration of which will usually be 2 days.

The review panel will be assisted by AEQES in arriving to Brussels (Belgium).



Where appropriate, the site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the major issues of the evaluation between the review panel and AEQES.

### 3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under article 2. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ENQA membership criteria. A draft will be submitted for comment to AEQES within four weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If AEQES chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by AEQES, finalise the document and submit it to AEQES and ENQA.

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

## 4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

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

## 5. Budget

5.1 AEQES shall pay the following review related fees:

- Chair: 5.000 EUR
- Review secretary: 5.000 EUR
- Other panel members (3): 3.000 EUR
- Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat: 5.000 EUR
- Travel and subsistence expenses (approximate): 6.000 EUR



This gives a total indicative cost of 30.000 EUR for the review. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, AEQES will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to AEQES if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

## **6. Indicative Schedule of the Review**

The duration of the evaluation is scheduled to take about 13 months, from August 2010 to September 2011:

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| AEQES begins self-evaluation                                | Spring 2010      |
| Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review     | October 2010     |
| Appointment of review panel members by ENQA                 | November 2010    |
| Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable | November 2010    |
| AEQES self-evaluation completed                             | February 2011    |
| Briefing of review panel members                            | March 2011       |
| Review panel site visit                                     | April 2011       |
| Draft of evaluation report to AEQES                         | early June 2011  |
| Statement of AEQES to review panel if necessary             | June 2011        |
| Submission of final report to AEQES and ENQA                | end of June 2011 |
| Consideration of the report and response of AEQES by ENQA   | September 2011   |
| Publication of report and implementation plan               | September 2011   |

