

Call for Tender: Website and Database of External Quality Assurance Results

Closing date: 31 August 2017

1. Introduction

EQAR is the official register of higher education quality assurance agencies that have demonstrated substantial compliance with an agreed set of standards, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). EQAR is an organisation in the public interest, and is governed and funded jointly by European governments and stakeholder organisations.

The – currently 47 – registered agencies carry out review, audit, evaluation or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes. In 2015, registered agencies have reviewed a total of 800 higher education institutions and 9000 study programmes. Agencies publish reports on those external quality assurance procedures on their own websites.

EQAR has decided to refresh its website as well as to establish a database of higher education institutions and programmes that have been subject to external quality assurance by a registered agency.

2. Objectives

The objective of the EQAR website is to provide information on EQAR in general, EQAR's activities, information on the registered agencies and system-level information on external quality assurance across the EHEA.

The objective of the database is to allow users to identify whether a specific higher education institution has been subject to external quality assurance in line with the ESG, by an EQAR-registered agency (either at institutional level, or one or more of its programmes), and to easily access the corresponding report(s). The database should allow to search for an institution, but not for individual programmes.

3. Lots

The present call for tender includes 3 separate lots:

- A) Update of the EQAR website, including:
 1. redesign/refreshment of the website design,
 2. update or migration of the Content-Management System,
 3. update and further development of custom extensions;

- B) Database backend, including:
1. design of an operational data model and a technical concept for automatic delivery of data by registered agencies,
 2. implementation of the software for data collection,
 3. development of backend for use by EQAR and registered agencies;
- C) Database public user interface, including:
1. development of the publicly-available frontend,
 2. interface for embedding into 3rd-party applications.

4. Specifications

The specifications for each lot are set out below. Tenderers are free to tender for one specific lot or any combination of lots.

All products should be based on free or open-source software.

As part of lot B, it should be envisaged to organise at least two consultation workshops, open to all registered agencies, with the aim of optimising the model and concept, and thus minimising effort and workload required on the side of agencies.

The database frontend (lot C) should integrate well with EQAR's general website.

Since an overhaul of the EQAR website is part of the call, there are no requirements as to the Content Management System (CMS) used. Tenderers re. lots B and C are, however, invited to indicate their preferred CMS as a platform for the database, or whether they propose a stand-alone solution.

While the full specifications are set out below, potential tenderers are encouraged to also consult the [Report and Operational Model for the Database of External Quality Assurance Results](#), which was the basis for EQAR's decision-making and for the present specifications.

4.A Website Update

The EQAR website was designed in 2007/08, together with its logo and general corporate design. While the website design should be update, the following should not be changed:

- EQAR logo
- Fonts used in printed publications (DINpro, Eurostile)
- Templates for letters, business cards, presentations, etc.

4.A.1 Existing Website and Content

EQAR's website is hosted on a server offering PHP versions PHP 5.5.38, 5.6.29, 7.0.14 & 7.1.1 and MySQL 5.7. Further specifications are available on request.

The content will largely remain structured as it currently is. The current menu has two visible navigation levels. A third level navigation should be available in an (optional) third-level menu or, alternatively, via extensive use of expandable/collapsible sections on a second-level page.

4.A.2 Design

The website should be redesigned to give it a modern and fresh look and to support responsive design. The website should use standard technologies (W3C-compliant HTML, CSS and JavaScript) and no proprietary extensions.

All typical markup (i.e. text, images, tables, ordered and unordered lists, forms) should be supported.

Additional specific elements to include:

- Pop-up windows/layers (example: <https://eqar.eu/register/map.html>)
- Expandable/collapsible boxes or sections (example: <https://eqar.eu/about/e4-group.html>)
- Floating boxes (containing text, images or any other content)

4.A.3 Content-Management System (CMS)

Content editing and proofing is done by small number of backend users, in a simple workflow (1 draft workspace, users self-review, no fine-grained permission control).

The website includes an internal login area (for ca. 30 Committee members/staff), which is primarily used for sharing files and internal documents with a simple access control (small amount of user groups).

The website currently works on Typo3 with a number of industry-standard and custom extensions.

The website should be updated to a current version of Typo3 or migrated to another CMS. All content (or only text content without images/files – optional) should be migrated.

4.A.4 Extensions and Specific Features

EQAR currently uses the following stock extensions:

- RealUrl for readable URLs
- Full-text search
- Forms
- Pop-ups
- Akkordion boxes (e.g. <https://eqar.eu/about/e4-group.html>)

The following custom extensions are being used:

- Register database: underlying the information presented at <https://eqar.eu/register/search.html> and list of agencies per country in <https://eqar.eu/register/map.html>

Changes:

- modify information template;
- allow synchronisation of address/contact data with general contact database (running on office server, MySQL-based)
- Interactive map: see <https://eqar.eu/register/map.html>, with per-country free-text information

The following new features are required:

- Calendar/events list
- News module
- Social share buttons on all pages
- Twitter feed on the home page
- Advanced handling of images (e.g. galleries or slide shows)

Tenderers are kindly asked to separately itemise the additional costs for the following optional features:

- Event registration module
- Possibility to embed video clips
- Module for dynamically generated charts and infographics
- Newsletter module (EQAR currently uses PHPlist hosted)
- Analytics software (EQAR currently uses Piwik)
- Integration with external contact database (currently running on office server, MySQL-based), especially signup/signout of newsletter

4.B Database Backend

4.B.1 Information to include

The database should include the following information. Registered agencies should be expected to provide this information in a structured format (see following sections).

1. Identification of the higher education institution (HEI)
 - a. ID number (A)
 - b. Name in English (A)
 - c. Name in official language(s) (A)
 - d. Country
 - e. Website (B)
 - f. NQF and QF-EHEA levels at which the HEI offers qualifications (B)
2. Information on external quality assurance procedure(s)
 - a. Quality assurance agency
 - b. Name of the external quality assurance procedure (C)

- c. Level (D):
institutional | programme
- d. Decision (D):
positive | positive with conditions | negative | n/a (= not resulting in a formal decision)
- e. Status (D):
part of the obligatory EQA system | voluntary
- f. Date of decision entering into force or report becoming valid
(as defined by the agency)
- g. Valid until
(expiry of accreditation, certification, etc., as defined by the agency and if applicable)
- h. Report(s) and decision(s)
- i. For programme-level QA procedures:
 - i. Name of the programme in official language(s) and English
 - ii. Name of the qualification(s) awarded
 - iii. Country (if different from HEI's main site)
 - iv. NQF and QF-EHEA level (B)

Notes:

(A) For those institutions contained in the ETER the ETER ID should be used, own ID numbers should be assigned for others. Agencies should identify the institution by its ID number (preferred) or, should that not be possible, by its name in English or the official language. The data should be completed with the institution's name (in English, the official language or both) from ETER data.

(B) Optional information; where possible, this could be completed from other sources, e.g. ETER. QF-EHEA levels to be included if the respective NQF has been self-certified.

(C) Fixed typology of names for each registered agency (up to ca. 10 names/categories per agency)

(D) Short explanatory texts should be provided (e.g. in a pop-up window) to explain the meaning of those categories and thus allow users to understand the information correctly in context.

4.B.2 List of higher education institutions (HEIs)

The database should be built on an existing list of HEIs, containing the information required as set out in section 4.B.1, list 1. In order to ensure quality and consistency, the list of HEIs should be managed centrally by EQAR.

The existing list of HEIs from the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER¹) should be imported and used as a starting point.

The information on those HEIs contained in ETER should be updated annually from ETER. There should, however, be a possibility to overwrite this information (i.e. a HEI changed its name or website).

HEIs from ETER should be identified by their ETER ID.

For the 12 EHEA countries not contained in ETER, EQAR would aim to acquire a list of officially recognised HEIs from the World Higher Education Database (WHED) or the competent national authorities (e.g. ministry of higher education or ENIC-NARIC).

For non-EHEA countries, HEIs should be added on an ad-hoc basis (see below).

Non-ETER/WHED HEIs should be identified by an ID generated by EQAR, where possible compatible with (1. preference) future ETER extensions or (2. preference) existing national ID numbers of the country in question.

4.B.3 List of external quality assurance (EQA) procedures and reports

The list of EQA procedures should be based on information provided by the registered agencies.

In order to minimise workload, the list of EQA procedures should generally be composed/updated automatically based on information provided by agencies, without manual intervention by EQAR (except for flags raised by automated checks, see below).

There is a many-to-many relationship between EQA reports and HEIs:

- For one HEI, there can be several EQA reports (from different agencies).
- One EQA report can related to several HEIs (e.g. joint programmes).

While the former case is common, the latter case is occasional, i.e. the vast majority of EQA reports will relate to only one HEI.

All entries in the list of EQA procedures should be identified by an ID, provided by the agency itself or automatically-generated otherwise, whereas the combination of agency and ID needs to be unique.

4.B.4 Data delivery by registered agencies

Some agencies carry out an extensive number of EQA procedures (i.e. hundreds per year), while others do not carry out more than ten or twenty

¹ETER is an initiative to provide statistical micro data on higher education institutions in Europe, funded by the European Commission and based on information from national statistical authorities. It includes basic data on higher education institutions in 36 of the 48 EHEA countries. ETER is freely accessible and reuse of the data is permitted.

EQA procedures. The database should thus offer two methods for data delivery by registered agencies:

- Manual entry (and change) via a web interface
- Bulk delivery in a file (e.g. XML, JSON or another suitable format)

The backend interface should allow the agency to:

1. manage the names/typology of EQA procedures used by the agency (see section 4.B.1, item 2.b);
2. add information on new EQA reports;
3. consult the list of its EQA reports and modify entries.

The database should allow for uploading files through the web interface or automatically (e.g. by the agency's own website or database software).

When delivering data in a file, agencies should be able to add new EQA reports as well as to modify information on existing EQA reports (identified by their unique ID, see above).

The two data delivery methods should be fully interoperable, i.e. agencies can modify through their web interface information that was initially submitted in a file, and vice versa.

Technical specifications for the file format should be developed by the tenderer in consultation with EQAR and registered agencies.

The full EQA report(s) and decision(s) should be delivered as a link or as a PDF file. If delivered as a link, the database software should download a copy of the file(s) to ensure that they will be available permanently for archival purposes.

4.B.5 Identification of HEIs

Given that there will often be several EQA reports by different agencies referring to the same HEI, consistent identification of HEIs is a crucial step.

When information is provided through the web interface, agencies should be able to search for an HEI by name or to browse the list by country.

If an existing HEI is selected, it should be internally identified by its (ETER/WHED or local) ID.

If the HEI is not found, the agency should be asked to provide the information required (see section 4). The information should be entered in the database, but only become public after confirmation by EQAR.

When information is provided as XML file, agencies should identify HEIs as follows:

1. By ID (ETER/WHED or local) - preferred
2. By name (English or local language) and website (optional) - otherwise

In the latter case, the database should attempt to match the name and website (if provided) against the existing list of HEIs. If those match an existing HEI with sufficient certainty no manual intervention should be needed.

If there is no clear match (e.g. name matches several HEIs, or name does not match any HEI), manual intervention by EQAR should be requested (confirmation of correct HEI, or completion and confirmation of a new HEI record).

For those cases where the agency knows or assumes that the HEI is not yet contained in the existing list, it should include the information required (see section 4).

Agencies should receive a notification, describing how those cases where HEIs were not identified by ID were resolved.

4.B.6 Historic Record

The database should keep a full historic record of all information. That is, when data is deleted or modified the previous information should remain available in order to allow users to consult information as current at a certain point in the past.

4.B.7 Reporting

Agencies would be requested to deliver new and updated data as it occurs, i.e. when they have carried out EQA procedures and published reports.

If agencies export data from their own system/database, they may choose to do so at regular intervals, chosen by the agency itself.

The backend should regularly generate reports on data submission of agencies, allowing it to monitor data submission.

The backend should send automatic reminders to agencies that have not delivered any data for more than a given period of time.

4.B.8 Quality control

In order to assure quality and consistency of the data, the backend should perform a number of “sanity checks” on data delivered by agencies (no matter through which method).

For every registered agency, there should be a number of specific rules describing expected EQA reports, based on the agency’s fields of activity. These should allow the database software to detect if an agency has provided data that is likely to be incorrect, or results from an activity that has not yet been reported to EQAR (e.g. agency normally carrying out only institutional evaluation reports EQA at programme level). The rules should especially assure that EQA reports with the status “part of the obligatory EQA system” are only provided by agencies that are recognised as part of the obligatory EQA system.

The rules would be a combination of level, status (see section 4 list 2) and country of the HEI, and could look as follows for one agency:

- EQA at “programme” level and “part of obligatory EQA” status in country “X”
- EQA at “programme” level and “voluntary” status in any country

The following sanity checks should be performed:

1. Agency changes names/typology – alert and confirmation
2. Data does not match agency rules – alert and confirmation
3. EQA of programme with QF-EHEA level out of HEI’s range of levels – alert and confirmation
4. EQA report in a country where agency was not active before – alert only
5. Data submitted or changed on report more than 1 year old – alert only
6. EQA of programme delivered in another country than HEI’s base country – alert only

For data where any of the above applies, the EQAR Secretariat should be notified. For cases marked “alert and confirmation”, the information should only be published after confirmation by EQAR. For cases marked “alert only”, the information should be published immediately and EQAR should intervene manually only if necessary.

Agencies using the web interface should be warned immediately if their data fails a sanity check, but could proceed with submission, which should then trigger the described process.

Agencies submitting a file should receive a notification about data that failed sanity checks.

4.B.9 Optional feature: Delivery as Linked Data

In both cases, agencies should be able to provide information:

- directly (i.e. entered via the web interface, or in a file)
- as Linked Data (i.e. providing a link to the agency’s own website, containing the required information in machine-readable format)

When provided directly, the agency should need to ensure that the data is updated if necessary. When provided as Linked Data, the data should be cached and checked for updates according to a given policy.

4.B.10 Optional feature: Third-party compatibility

In addition to delivering data in a file according to EQAR’s specifications, it should be envisaged for agencies to submit data in the same format as submitted to an existing initiative where they feed data into.

4.C Database public user interface

4.C.1 Basic functionality

Users should be able to search for an institution by a keyword (matched against the name and location), or to browse the list of institutions by country.

After selecting an institution, the user should be presented with a list of external quality assurance procedures, which might be at institutional or programme level (incl. joint programmes). For each external quality assurance procedure, basic information and a link to the report (at the agency's website) should be provided.

The following mock-up was prepared by EQAR for internal purposes. It only illustrates the envisaged functionality of the user interface.

1. Search for a HEI:

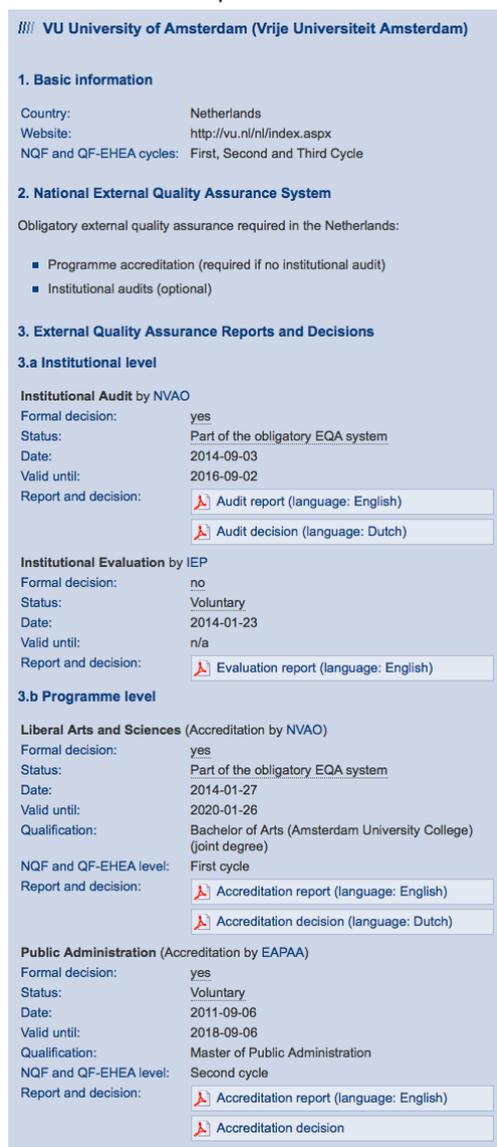


A search interface with a text input field containing 'amsterdam', a 'Search' button, and a 'Based in*' dropdown menu.

2. Select HEI from matches:

| Name | Based in* |
|--|-------------|
| University of Amsterdam | Netherlands |
| VU University Amsterdam | Netherlands |
| Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten | Netherlands |
| Hogeschool van Amsterdam | Netherlands |
| ... | ... |

3. List of EQA reports and decisions at the HEI:



VU University of Amsterdam (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

1. Basic information

Country: Netherlands
 Website: <http://vu.nl/index.aspx>
 NQF and QF-EHEA cycles: First, Second and Third Cycle

2. National External Quality Assurance System

Obligatory external quality assurance required in the Netherlands:

- Programme accreditation (required if no institutional audit)
- Institutional audits (optional)

3. External Quality Assurance Reports and Decisions

3.a Institutional level

Institutional Audit by NVAO

Formal decision: yes
 Status: Part of the obligatory EQA system
 Date: 2014-09-03
 Valid until: 2016-09-02
 Report and decision: [Audit report \(language: English\)](#)
[Audit decision \(language: Dutch\)](#)

Institutional Evaluation by IEP

Formal decision: no
 Status: Voluntary
 Date: 2014-01-23
 Valid until: n/a
 Report and decision: [Evaluation report \(language: English\)](#)

3.b Programme level

Liberal Arts and Sciences (Accreditation by NVAO)

Formal decision: yes
 Status: Part of the obligatory EQA system
 Date: 2014-01-27
 Valid until: 2020-01-26
 Qualification: Bachelor of Arts (Amsterdam University College) (joint degree)
 NQF and QF-EHEA level: First cycle
 Report and decision: [Accreditation report \(language: English\)](#)
[Accreditation decision \(language: Dutch\)](#)

Public Administration (Accreditation by EAPAA)

Formal decision: yes
 Status: Voluntary
 Date: 2011-09-06
 Valid until: 2018-09-06
 Qualification: Master of Public Administration
 NQF and QF-EHEA level: Second cycle
 Report and decision: [Accreditation report \(language: English\)](#)
[Accreditation decision](#)

4.C.2 Advanced functionality

In addition, users should be able to use/access the information as follows:

1. Search, browse or filter external quality assurance reports by
 1. Quality assurance agency
 2. Report date
 3. Type of review
2. Download information
(complete or filtered, as CSV or Excel file)

Normally, users should only see information on EQA procedures that are currently valid. Users should be able to choose (see 4.B.6 above) to see also expired EQA procedures, to see only EQA procedures that were valid at a certain point in time, or to consult a full history of changes (e.g. changes in an HEI's name, changes to the information on an EQA procedure).

4.C.3 Embedding in third-party applications

The frontend should provide an interface allowing to embed queries to the database in third-party websites or applications. Tenderers are invited to make proposals for a flexible and open interface.

5. Contact

Potential tenderers are most welcome to contact EQAR if they require additional information or clarification. Please contact:

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Interested providers are invited to submit their tender
via email to info@eqar.eu by 31 August 2017 at the latest.