

# Procedures for Applications

Register Committee

6 August 2008

Definition of terms:

“**Register**” hereinafter refers to the register of quality assurance agencies published by EQAR.

“**Applicant**” hereinafter refers to a quality assurance agency that seeks inclusion on the register.

“**Listed agency**” hereinafter refers to a quality assurance agency that has been admitted to the register by the Register Committee.

“**External review**” hereinafter refers to a review of a quality assurance agency’s work by an “**external review panel**”, coordinated by a “**review coordinator**”.

“**External review report**” hereinafter refers to the written report that has been agreed by the review panel following completion of the external review.

“**Self-evaluation report**” hereinafter refers to the report compiled by the applicant for consideration by the external review panel.

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In accordance with article 16 b. of the Statutes the Register Committee, after consultation of the General Assembly at its meeting on 25 June 2008, has agreed the following Procedures for Applications:

## I. General provisions

### Art. 1 - Criteria for inclusion

To be included in the Register, applicants need to demonstrate that they operate in substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, as adopted by the European ministers responsible for higher education in Bergen on 20 May 2005, or any succeeding document (hereafter referred to as “ESG”), attested through an external review in line with the requirements stipulated in part II of these Procedures.

### Art. 2 - ENQA membership

Full membership of ENQA normally constitutes satisfactory evidence for substantial compliance with the ESG.

### Art. 3 - Applications

- (1) All applications shall consist of the following documents in English:
  - a. Application form
  - b. Terms of reference of the review

- c. Self-evaluation report that has been submitted for the external review
  - d. External review report<sup>1</sup>
  - e. Applicant's statement on the external review report, if applicable
  - f. Documentation of the applicant's application for ENQA membership including documentation supporting the reasons for approval, if applicable
  - g. Any other documents relevant to the application
- (2) The external review report shall be published by the applicant before application. All other documents shall be treated as confidential by EQAR and shall not be disclosed to any third parties.
- (3) An application fee shall be charged pursuant to art. 22 (2) of the Statutes.

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#### Art. 4 - Process

- (1) Applications shall be submitted to the Secretariat in writing.
- (2) The Applicant can withdraw the application any time before the stipulated deadline for submission of additional information (cf. art. 9 (2)) or for making additional representation to the Register Committee (cf. art. 10 (2)), but not thereafter.

## II. External reviews

#### Art. 5 - General provisions and coordination

- (1) The Applicant's substantial compliance with the ESG needs to be evidenced through an external review by an independent expert panel according to the provisions of these Procedures.
- (2) EQAR will not organise nor coordinate reviews itself. It will rely on reviews coordinated by a recognised national authority or another organisation that has the necessary professional capacity<sup>2</sup> (including, for instance, ENQA). The review should be conducted in an unbiased, objective and independent manner.
- (3) The review coordinator shall be independent of the applicant.
- (4) The coordinator should provide the review panel with appropriate guidelines for exercising its role.
- (5) The review coordinator and the applicant should agree on the terms of reference.

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<sup>1</sup> The report will be expected to be reasonably up to date. Inclusion will be valid for 5 years from the date of the review report. (cf. art. 11 (1))

<sup>2</sup> The Register Committee will verify on a case-by-case basis whether the review coordinator has the necessary professional capacity. Applicants who are in doubt whether a potential review coordinator would be acceptable are invited to approach EQAR for consideration in advance.

#### Art. 6 - Review panel

- (1) The review panel shall consist of at least four persons. The panel members should possess sufficient knowledge, experience and expertise to be able to understand, analyse and judge the applicant's activities.
- (2) The review panel members shall represent a range of expertise, covering the different perspectives of the key stakeholders and comprising of at least an academic staff member and a student from a higher education institution.
- (3) At least one review panel member shall be from a country other than that of the applicant.
- (4) The members of the review panel shall be sufficiently independent from the applicant to be able to exercise their role objectively and without conflict of interest.

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#### Art. 7 - Self-evaluation report

The self-evaluation report shall reflect on the applicant's compliance with the ESG. It should be a critical reflection on the activities, strengths and weaknesses of the applicant and the added value they provide for quality improvement of higher education institutions.

#### Art. 8 - External review report

- (1) The external review report shall provide sufficient evidence of the applicant's compliance with the ESG. It should encompass a summary of evidence, an analysis and a conclusion for each of the standards.
- (2) The external review report shall be agreed upon by all external review panel members. It should be submitted together with all annexes and dissenting opinions where such exist.

### III. Decision making on applications

#### Art. 9 - Basis for decision making

- (1) Without prejudice to par. 2 and art. 10 (2), the Register Committee shall make its decision based on the documents filed with the application.
- (2) In case of a substantial lack of relevant information or need for clarification, EQAR may request further information from the coordinator of the review. In exceptional cases EQAR may request further information from the applicant or the review panel. An appropriate deadline shall be granted for additional responses. Failure on the part of the applicant to submit requested information within the stipulated deadline shall be deemed as withdrawal of the application.

#### Art. 10 - Possible decisions

- (1) The Register Committee can decide to admit an applicant to the Register or to reject the application.
- (2) Before a final decision to reject an application is taken, the applicant shall be notified of the grounds for possible rejection and have the possibility to

make additional representation to the Register Committee within an appropriate deadline. Failure on the part of the applicant to make additional representation within the deadline shall be deemed as withdrawal of the application.

- (3) Applicants shall be notified of all decisions in writing, including an account of the reasons for admission or rejection.
- (4) An unsuccessful applicant may only reapply after a 3-year period has elapsed from the date of the external review report and such an application shall be based on a new external review, unless the Register Committee invites the unsuccessful applicant to reapply earlier and/or without a new external review, as appropriate.

#### **Art. 11 - Validity of decisions**

- (1) Following admission, the applicant shall be included in the Register for five years from the date the external review report has been completed.
- (2) An annual listing fee shall be charged pursuant to art. 22 (2) of the Statutes.
- (3) Provided that an application for renewal (including an external review report) is submitted to EQAR within one month of the expiry of inclusion, a listed agency may remain on the Register until the Register Committee decides on the application for renewal.
- (4) A listed agency can withdraw from the Register at any time.

#### **Art. 12 - Exceptional circumstances**

- (1) A listed agency shall notify EQAR of its own accord about changes to its legal form and status, amendments to its statutes and substantial changes in its process or methodology.
- (2) The Register Committee shall reconsider its decision to admit a listed agency if substantial procedural errors were made in reaching the initial decision, the initial decision was based on false facts or evidence, or there are serious concerns that the listed agency no longer fulfils the criteria for inclusion.
- (3) The listed agency concerned shall be notified if a reconsideration is initiated.
- (4) The Register Committee may
  - a. declare its decision void ab initio if the criteria for inclusion were evidently not fulfilled when the decision was made; or
  - b. exclude a listed agency if it evidently no longer fulfils the criteria for inclusion, as from the date on which it ceased to fulfil the criteria; or
  - c. reduce the remaining validity period of the listed agency's inclusion, as appropriate, if there are serious concerns about the applicant's fulfilment of the criteria and the Register Committee considers it impossible to make a judgement without a new review.

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- (5) The listed agency concerned shall be granted the right to make representation to the Register Committee before any decision is taken with an appropriate deadline of not less than 30 days. The listed agency shall be notified of the decision and its grounds.

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**Art. 13 - Publication**

- (1) In case of admission to the Register, the following information shall be published on the EQAR's website:
- name and contact details of the agency
  - decision of the Register Committee including the main reasons and the duration of inclusion
  - country in which the agency is established
  - information on the agency's quality assurance activities
  - countries within which the agency operates
  - ENQA membership status of the agency
  - web links to its external review report
  - web links to the agency's reports and publications
- (2) The Register Committee may adopt indicators for substantial compliance to illustrate EQAR's criteria for potential applicants. The indicators would be illustrative and not binding.
- (3) The Register Committee may include anonymous summaries of its decisions in its annual reports in order to provide examples of compliance and non-compliance to future applicants.

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**IV. Further provisions**

**Art. 14 - No conflict of interest policy**

- (1) A member of the Register Committee who has a conflict of interest with regard to a particular application may not take part in processing or making decisions on it. A member is assumed to have a conflict of interest if, for example:
- s/he receives financial compensation from the applicant as an employee, consultant or subcontractor;
  - s/he holds a position, whether paid or unpaid, with the applicant, for example as a member of a commission or board;
  - s/he was involved in the external review of the applicant;
  - s/he holds a position in an entity<sup>3</sup> currently being reviewed by the applicant;

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<sup>3</sup> The term "entity" may refer to any functional or organisational unit that is subject to quality review, such as a higher education institution, a department or a study

- e. any of the above applies to a close relative of the person;
  - f. any of the above applied until recently;
- (2) A member is expected to declare a conflict of interest of his/her own accord.
- (3) Applicants shall notify the President of the Executive Board if they consider that a member of the Register Committee has a conflict of interest with regard to their application.
- (4) Any disputes shall be settled by the President of the Executive Board in consultation with the Chair of the Register Committee.

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programme; it does not necessarily refer to a legal entity or require any particular degree of organisation.