

Call for Tender

Coordination of the External Evaluation of EQAR

Deadline: 18 November 2020

1. Background

EQAR was founded by the E4 Group based on the mandate received from ministers at the London summit in May 2007. Ministers then requested that EQAR be evaluated externally after two years of operation:

“We ask the E4 group [...], and to ensure that after two years of operation, the register is evaluated externally, taking account of the views of all stakeholders.” (London Communiqué, 2007)

Consequently, a first external evaluation of EQAR was organised in 2010/11. The evaluation was coordinated by a Steering Group working under the auspices of the US Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), which appointed an independent expert panel. The report of the evaluation is [published on the EQAR website](#).

In 2015/16, EQAR carried out a comprehensive self-evaluation. The report, adopted by the 2016 General Assembly, is [published on the EQAR website](#).

The self-evaluation report contained the recommendation that EQAR “adopt a 5-year cycle for regular self-evaluations, with an external evaluation following every second self-evaluation, i.e. every 10 years”, which was later endorsed by the General Assembly.

In its Strategy 2018 – 2022, in line with the above principle, EQAR committed itself to carry out the next self-evaluation, followed by an external evaluation, in 2020/2021. The evaluation report should be based on an objective and credible analysis, and be regarded as such by EQAR's members, partners and stakeholders.

EQAR is now looking for a suitable organisation or expert to coordinate the evaluation. This Call for Tender is open to suitable organisations or experts who fulfil the following requirements and are able to coordinate this evaluation in line with the key features and timeline described below.

2. Tasks of the Tenderer

The successful tenderer will serve as coordinator of the evaluation and is expected to assume overall responsibility for the evaluation process, including to:

1. agree with EQAR on the Terms of Reference, including a list of ESG standards to be used and how they should be applied to EQAR;

2. recruit and appoint the panel of experts;
3. provide adequate briefing to the panel;
4. support and work with the panel throughout the evaluation;
5. ensure the timely delivery and quality of the report.

3. Requirements for Tenderers

Given its importance for the entire evaluation process, the coordinator must:

1. have expertise in the context in which EQAR operates, i.e. in relation to quality assurance of higher education and European higher education policy, especially the workings of the Bologna Process;
2. have at least five years of experience in the conduct or coordination of comparable evaluations or analyses in the field of higher education;
3. have performed work at European level or at least across several countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA);
4. have the appropriate standing and reputation to ensure credibility of the evaluation;
5. not have a real or apparent conflict of interest, such as being a (potential) member of EQAR or a (potential) applicant for registration.

4. Scope of the Evaluation

The external evaluation should address whether EQAR's organisational structure and the activities implemented by EQAR are fit for purpose and effective in light of EQAR's mission and objectives. These are set out in the EQAR Statutes, Mission Statement and the Strategy 2018-2022, and should be seen in conjunction with the overarching policy goals of the EHEA, e.g. the ministerial communiqués.

In particular, the evaluation should address:

1. Are the processes related to the Register fit for purpose? Do they comply with those ESG standards that are pertinent for and can be applied to EQAR correspondingly?
2. How has EQAR performed against the indicators defined in the Strategic Plan 2018-2022?
3. What is the extent of EQAR's contribution to the wider policy goals enshrined in its mission and objectives, and the vision of the EHEA?

5. Key Features

The following key features are deliberately kept generic. The tenderer is invited to outline their proposed methodology and approach in detail.

5.1 Outcome

The evaluation should result in a report, containing a qualitative analysis, conclusions and recommendations for improvement with regard to the overarching question and the three particular ones.

While the coordinator may assume responsibilities in drafting the report, the panel should have full authority over its content.

EQAR should have an opportunity to comment on the report's factual accuracy before it is finalised.

The report must be submitted in English.

EQAR must have the right to publish the evaluation report under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike or a compatible license.

5.2 Panel of Experts

In order to ensure that the evaluation is based on a broad range of perspectives the coordinator is expected to assemble an independent panel of experts for the evaluation. The panel members should:

- include expertise in quality assurance of higher education, the European higher education policy landscape (in particular the Bologna Process);
- have understanding of the workings of organisations comparable to EQAR;
- cover the perspectives of the relevant stakeholders, including at least:
 - higher education institutions,
 - students and
 - quality assurance bodies.

The panel will be appointed by the coordinator, while EQAR has a right to raise substantiated objections against the proposed panel composition.

5.3 Evidence Base

The report should base its findings on the self-evaluation report and other documentation provided by EQAR, as required by the panel.

In addition, the evaluation should be informed by:

- a site visit to EQAR with interviews of its leadership, staff and governing bodies;
- interviews with external stakeholders and partners, such as:
 - members of EQAR and permanent observers;

- registered agencies as well as agencies that applied for registration unsuccessfully;
- external partners (non-member governments, national organisations, institutions);
- additional desk research, survey(s), etc.

6. Timeline

Milestone	Time	Responsibility
Tender submitted	15 November 2020	Tenderer
Coordinator chosen	early December 2020	EQAR
Terms of Reference agreed	January 2021	Coordinator & EQAR
Panel appointed	March 2021	Coordinator
Self-evaluation report submitted	30 April 2021	EQAR
Site visit	June 2021	Panel
Draft report	September 2021	Panel
Comments on factual accuracy	October 2021	EQAR
External report finalised	November 2021	Panel

7. Budget

The price quoted by the tenderer must include the coordinator's own costs and fee; the fees for the panel members; the costs related to their preparation and briefing; the travel, accommodation, and subsistence costs for the site visit; and all other eventual costs related to the evaluation.

The participation of interviewees to the site visit will be paid for by EQAR.

The maximum price for the evaluation is set at EUR 30 000, excluding VAT; within this budget the price will not influence the primary ranking of bids.

8. Format of the tender

The tender should include:

1. name and contact information of the proposed review coordinator;
2. detailed presentation of the proposed methodology and approach, addressing in particular:
 1. distribution of responsibilities between the coordinator and the panel;

2. number and profile of expert panel members that the coordinator plans to appoint, how experts will be recruited, trained and briefed for their role;
3. how it envisages to conduct the site visit and interviews;
4. which other sources the coordinator envisages to rely upon;
3. breakdown of costs explaining the quoted total price;
4. evidence for relevant experience as described above, e.g. by way of references to published reports or similar;
5. information on the staff/individual(s) envisaged to be assigned to the coordination of the evaluation;
6. acceptance of the timeline set out above.

The tender must be drafted in English.

9. Selection

From amongst those tenders that comply with the requirements (including the maximum price) set out herein, the EQAR Executive Board will select the coordinator using two criteria:

- relevant experience of the tenderer; and
- presentation of an adequate and convincing approach.

Tenderers can expect to be informed about the selection result during the first two weeks of December 2020. EQAR might seek additional information from tenderers to inform the selection process.

10. Contact

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

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Interested providers are invited to submit their tender via email to tender@eqar.eu by **18 November 2020** (23:59 CET) at the latest.