

European Quality Assurance Register – EQAR

Introduction

The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) provides clear and reliable information on the quality assurance agencies (QAAs) operating in Europe: this is a list of agencies that substantially comply with the ► European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) as adopted by the European ministers of higher education in Bergen 2005. It will be web-based and freely accessible.

The EQAR is established by the E4 Group¹ and will be operational by summer 2008. The European ministers in charge of higher education mandated the E4 Group to establish the EQAR at their summit in London (May 2007).

The Register is expected to:

- promote student mobility by providing a basis for the increase of trust among higher education institutions;
- reduce opportunities for “accreditation mills” to gain credibility;
- provide a basis for governments to authorise higher education institutions to choose any agency from the Register, if that is compatible with national arrangements;
- provide a means for higher education institutions to choose between different agencies, if that is compatible with national arrangements;
- serve as an instrument to improve the quality of agencies and to promote mutual trust among them.

Criteria, reviews and applications

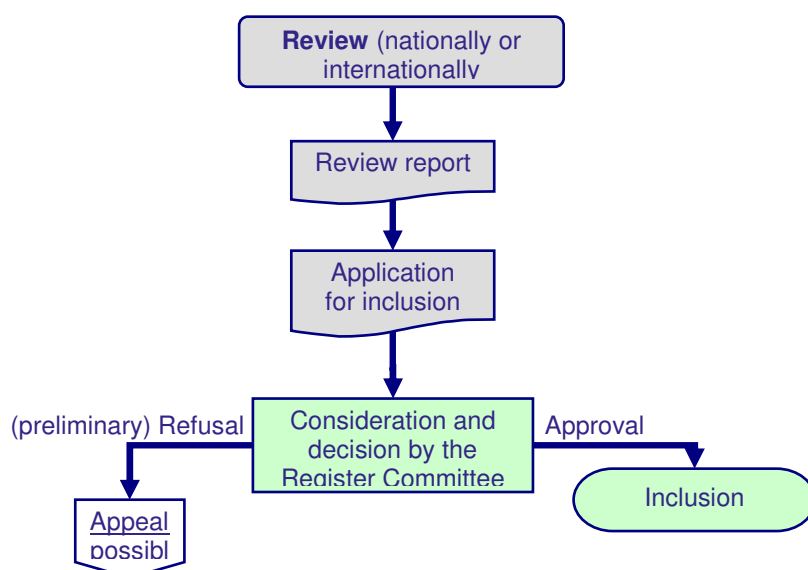
All agencies which comply substantially with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) will be admitted to the Register. As it is based on substantial compliance with the ESG as a criterion, full ENQA membership would normally constitute satisfactory evidence for inclusion in the Register.

The Register will not organise any reviews of QAAs itself. There will be two options on how a review of an applicant agency can be organised:

1. A nationally coordinated review, including reviews organised for the purpose of ENQA membership. This will be the usual way to enter the Register.
2. A review coordinated by a non-national body, either by ENQA or any other organisation acceptable to the Register. This will be the case

¹ European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Students’ Union (ESU, formerly ESIB), European University Association (EUA) and European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)

where a nationally coordinated review is neither possible nor appropriate.



Usually one agency will not have to undergo multiple reviews. On the contrary, an agency can carry out one review for multiple purposes, provided it contains sufficient evidence of substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines. The Register Committee and the General Assembly will jointly develop Procedures for Applications that also contain minimum requirements and guidelines for reviews.

The Register Committee will take its decision based on the review report and further information provided by the applicant agency. In case of rejection, the applicant will be granted the possibility to make further representation before a final decision is taken.

The applicant can appeal against a decision of the Register Committee on procedural grounds or in the case of perversity of judgement. Appeals will be considered and decided upon by an Appeals Committee. A successful appeal will lead to reconsideration of the application.

Structure and governance

To maximise trust and reliability, the Register's hallmark is a genuine stakeholder partnership approach. It has been developed and will be founded by four European organisations representing higher education institutions (EUA and EURASHE), quality assurance agencies (ENQA) and students (ESU).

The **Register Committee** will decide upon admissions to the Register. This Committee consists of members who are experienced in quality assurance, acting in their individual capacity. They will carefully evaluate applications and decide whether the applicant substantially complies with the European Standards and Guidelines.

The Committee is composed as follows:

- 8 members nominated by ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE (2 each)
- 2 members nominated by Business Europe and Education International
- 1 chairperson, as additional member, appointed by the Register Committee

The Committee’s meetings will be attended by five members of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) as observers. The **Appeals Committee** will decide on possible appeals, see paragraph on appeals above.

Principal decisions, such as the budget and the election of the Association’s bodies, will be made by the **General Assembly**, comprising all members: The E4 organisations will be Founding Members of the International Non-Profit Association that will operate the Register. BusinessEurope and Education International will be actively involved as Social Partner members of the Association. The individual EHEA governments and intergovernmental organisations, such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO’s European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES), will be able to take part as Governmental Members.

Usually, decisions will be taken by majorities of both the Governmental Members and the Nongovernmental Members, i.e. Founding Members and Social Partners. This double majority scheme reflects the cooperation of governments and stakeholders in the Bologna Process.

The **Executive Board** is responsible for the administration of the Association. This relieves the Register Committee from administrative tasks thus leaving it free to deliberate and decide independently. The day-to-day management of the Register will be in the hands of a 1.5 FTE **Secretariat** headed by a Director.

