The European Framework for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The Bologna Process

The evaluations conducted by Hcéres are governed by a European framework defined by the Bologna Process. This process was initiated in 1998 by the ministers for higher education of France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy and it aims to develop the European Higher Education Area through a number of actions, including cooperation in matters of quality assurance in higher education. Today, this process involves 48 countries.

The evaluations conducted by Hcéres are therefore designed as external quality assurance activities for the evaluated institutions. There are a number of key principles in the Bologna Process that govern its various missions:

- The higher education institutions hold primary responsibility for the quality of their study programme and service offering,
- Respect for the diversity of the institutions that are evaluated,
- The expectations of stakeholders, including those of students, must be taken into account.

In matters of evaluation or external quality assurance, this European framework includes, among others:

- Evaluation by peers
- An evaluation cycle comprising a self-assessment followed by an external evaluation
- Transparency and publication of evaluation reports
- Support for continuous improvement
- The development of a Quality culture

The common core of which stakeholders in national higher education systems must take ownership is described in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

More about the Bologna Process

The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)
The ESG were initially adopted in 2005 by the European Ministers for Higher Education in Bergen, with the revised ESG being approved in 2015 in Yerevan after extensive consultation of stakeholders, in which Hcéres took part.

The ESG:

- are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education;
- are not standards for quality, nor do they prescribe how the quality assurance processes are implemented;
- provide guidance, covering the areas which are vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education.

Alongside the ESG, other frameworks also contribute to promoting transparency and mutual trust in higher education within the EHEA: qualification frameworks, the ECTS and the diploma supplement.

Hcéres joined forces with the members of the Fraq-Sup network to draft the French translation of the ESG.

When an evaluation concerns a teaching activity, Hcéres takes account of the ESG when drafting its standards.

> Download The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

### European recognition of Hcéres

At European level, two organisations play a major role in building and promoting the quality assurance framework within the EHEA: the European Association for Quality in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The role of EQAR is to keep a register of the quality assurance agencies that comply with the requirements of the European standards (ESG). To be listed in the Register, quality agencies such as Hcéres undertake a self-assessment process followed by an external evaluation, every five years.

The listing of Hcéres in the Register was renewed on 19 June 2017 at the end of a process that had begun in 2015:

- The self-assessment report released in April 2016
- The external evaluation report published in February 2017
- The mid-term follow-up report

This European recognition attests to the conformity of Hcéres’ practices with the ESG. It concerns the evaluation of higher education institutions, the evaluation of academic programmes and the evaluation of doctoral schools and colleges, conducted in France and abroad. It is a major issue for the High Council and for the evaluated entities: the recognition strengthens the credibility of the French research and higher education system and contributes to the international visibility of Hcéres.

In addition to the issue of recognition, the process is fully integrated into the Hcéres quality approach and drives the improvement actions of the High Council.

As required by the European framework, the Hcéres has initiated the renewal of its recognition at the beginning of 2021. The main stages of the process:

- January - June 2021: Hcéres self-evaluation. This is a periodic, unifying exercise that is fully integrated into the High Council's continuous improvement process. The questioning of the functioning and practices in place will make it possible to construct avenues for improvement and development;
- September 2021: evaluation visit by the international committee of experts coordinated by ENQA;
- February 2022: Publication of the external evaluation report after an adversarial process (December 2021) and Hcéres's application to EQAR.