

# EVALUATION STANDARDS FOR FOREIGN RESEARCH BODIES

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## INTRODUCTION

This document features the evaluation standards for the evaluation of foreign research bodies, including funding agencies<sup>1</sup>.

### Principles

The evaluations of research bodies and funding agencies conducted under this framework respect the following principles:

- The evaluation of a research bodies is a peer review, carried out by an expert committee;
- These experts are appointed by the Hcéres in compliance with the principles of neutrality, expertise, balance, absence of conflict of interest, independence and integrity laid down in the research code and the evaluation charter;
- The evaluation is collegial; the chair of the expert committee guarantees this;
- The evaluation report, published on the Hcéres website, is signed by the chair of the expert committee, on their behalf, and countersigned by the Hcéres President;
- The evaluated research body is given the opportunity to comment throughout and at the end of the evaluation;
- The evaluation is carried out with due respect for the autonomy of the research body and the responsibilities of its governance bodies and its top executives.

Although not formally part of the *European standards and guidelines (ESG) for quality assurance in the European higher education area* - as these European Standards developed in the context of the "Bologna process" are relevant to the field of higher education in Europe - this framework takes into account several fundamental principles of the ESG, including the following ones:

- The objectives of the evaluation are explicit and public;
- The evaluation processes are based on appropriate procedures, known to both evaluators and evaluated;
- The standards and evaluation criteria are explicit and public;
- The evaluation is based in particular on a self-evaluation carried out by the research body.

### Objectives of the evaluation

The Hcéres missions specify the main objectives of the evaluation of a research body:

- To issue assessments based on the quality of the achieved results for the attention of the research unit, public actors, partners and interested publics: these assessments specify the strong and weak points and are accompanied by recommendations;
- To provide advice to assist the research body in the development and implementation of its institutional policy and in the allocation of resources to its internal components, and to its supervising authorities and funders.

### Structure of the framework

#### Fields of evaluation

The framework is structured in five main fields, which define the proposed scope of the evaluation. Fields 1 to 4 cover *ex-post* evaluation, while field 5 deals with strategic orientations for the coming period.

#### Standards

The standards specify the expectations for which the evaluation estimates the level of achievement. The set of standards therefore constitutes the scope of the field of evaluation with which they are associated.

#### The criteria

A set of criteria is associated with each standard. The criteria specify how experts assess the achievement level of each standard. Without being exclusive or exhaustive and without being ranked in order of importance, the criteria define the main elements of analysis used in the assessment.

In what follows, the wording of the standards and evaluation criteria is intended to be adapted as necessary to ensure their relevance to the context in which each research body carries out its missions and activities.

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<sup>1</sup> In the framework, the word research body also applies to research funding agencies.

## Key dimensions of evaluation

The evaluation of a research body mainly reviews the following dimensions, listed in fields 1 to 4 below.

**Institutional Positioning and strategy:** the institutional positioning of the research body refers to the role it plays in its national, regional and international environment and the overall ambition it has. The institutional positioning takes into account all of the research body's missions. The institutional strategy defines the orientations and objectives that reflect the research body's ambition and the main developments desired for its institutional positioning and activities.

**Governance and organisation:** governance includes all the bodies, rules and decision-making processes which develop and implement the institutional strategy. Governance links the strategic and operational levels and encompasses all the research body's activities.

The organisation refers to the internal structuring choices made by the institution to ensure its missions and implement its strategy.

**The main characteristics of the strategy implementation:** for several key strategic issues (involvement in the development of campuses, implementation of calls for tender, its role within the national higher education, research and innovation system, its regional and/or international commitment as well as international cooperation, its human resources policy, etc.), the operational implementation of the research body's strategy, the actions taken in this respect and their impact should be examined.

**Activities and results:** this involves assessing in which conditions the research body carries out its various activities and the main results achieved, alone or in partnership. It is also about assessing the evolution of these results and comparing them with the actions taken to implement the research body's strategy.

The evaluation of the research body is essentially an ex-post evaluation, focusing on the research body's strategy, action and results during an identified reporting period prior to the evaluation. This period – in principle five years - is agreed between Hcéres and the research body prior to the evaluation, taking into account the priorities set by its supervising authority (if any) and the date of the previous evaluation. However, the evaluation will also look at the main orientations and objectives forecasted by research body for the upcoming period - at the time of the evaluation and prior to the possible dialogue with its supervising authority (if any): this will be covered in field 5.

## FIELD 1: INSTITUTIONAL POSITIONING AND STRATEGY

This field of evaluation is divided into two standards relating to the way the research body perceives its local, national and international research and higher education environment and its strategy with regard to its missions as defined by its supervising authority(if any).

### **Standard 1: The research body identifies its institutional position in the higher education, research and innovation landscape to which it belongs.**

C1. The research body expresses a clear vision of its missions, its commitment to its public and private funders and to society, in line with its history, values and status.

C2. The research body defines its role in the higher education, research and innovation environment to which it belongs as well its place at regional and/or international level, its types of activity and its modes of action in its institutional and economic environment. It defines the evolution of its positioning over time.

C3. In order to define its institutional positioning, the research body relies on a diagnosis based, in particular, on comparative analyses at the international level.

C4. The research body's institutional positioning is clear and well-articulated with public policies and its funders.

C5. The research body is able to analyse the changes in its positioning during the reporting period.

### **Standard 2: The research body has a clear and coherent institutional strategy during the reporting period in line with its missions and positioning.**

C1. The strategy for the reporting period is clear and formalised. It is consistent with the research body's positioning and the developments expected by its supervising authority (if any). It sets out orientations and objectives, which are, where appropriate, stated in a reference text/document drawn up between the research body and its supervising authority (if any).

C2. The institutional strategy includes priority orientations for the research body's scientific policy, based on scientific foresight and the identification of its strengths and weaknesses.

C3. The institutional strategy includes orientations and objectives to increase the research body's contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of the country, by developing innovation and scientific expertise in support of public policies, and more broadly by increasing the inclusion of science in society.

C4. The institutional strategy includes orientations and objectives for fostering new and emerging research topics, risk-taking, interdisciplinarity and the development of young scientists.

C5. The institutional strategy includes a policy to ensure that the research body actively contributes to the development and influence of its academic and scientific partner structures.

C6. The institutional strategy includes orientations and objectives on the research body's involvement in the European Research Area, if the research body is from a member or affiliated country, and the development of its international cooperation.

C7. The institutional strategy includes orientations and objectives on research integrity, ethics, deontology and sustainable development.

## FIELD 2: GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATION

This field of evaluation is divided into three standards relating to the functioning of the research body with its internal bodies and decision-making processes to implement its strategy. The way the research body communicates and monitors its implementation is assessed.

### **Standard 3: The research body governance is based on internal bodies and decision-making processes that are adapted to its missions and the means chosen to implement its strategy.**

C1. Political and administrative governance bodies and key players have well-defined roles and responsibilities. The research body's main partners are involved in the governance.

C2. Decision-making processes are clearly explained and enable the research body to carry out effective actions internally or in partnership.

C3. The governance bodies and their processes allow the different categories of staff to express themselves and to participate.

C4. The gender balance in the research body's bodies and among its senior managers is satisfactory, or is addressed by relevant actions to improve it.

C5. Change management related to the implementation of the research body's strategy is subject to explicit and coherent managerial processes and responsibilities.

C6. The research body explicitly identifies the follow-up actions it has taken on the recommendations of any previous evaluations.

### **Standard 4: The research body monitors its activities, the implementation of its strategy and develops a communication policy.**

C1. The research body has tools to monitor its activities and results in a relevant and reliable way. Appropriate performance indicators are monitored at the various levels of the research body.

C2. The research body identifies, assesses and controls the risks associated with its activities.

C3. The research body is involved in a process of continuous improvement of its operations. A quality policy is supported by the research body's management and is disseminated to the staff.

C4. The research body monitors the actions implementing its strategy and their results and takes corrective actions if necessary.

C5. The external communication policy provides a better understanding of the research body's missions, activities and strategy and highlights its results and achievements. It involves the research body's stakeholders in a balanced way.

C6. The internal communication policy contributes to staff support for the strategy and facilitates information sharing. It involves the research body's stakeholders.

## **Standard 5: The research body sets up an organisational structure adapted to its activities and the implementation of its strategy.**

C1. The geographical organisation at local, national and international levels is adapted to the activities and strategy.

C2. The research body is structured into operational entities that are coherent and adapted to the strategy.

C3. The developments of the research body during the contractually established reporting period are in line with the implementation of the strategy.

## FIELD 3: MAIN FEATURES OF STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

This field of evaluation is divided into five standards relating to the means that the research body develops to implement its strategy: animation of research programmes, human resources policy, prospective views on its means, participation in local, national or international actions while paying attention to the concepts of research integrity, ethics and deontology, protection of scientific and technological heritage as well as principles of sustainable development.

### **Standard 6: The research body has a clearly identified role in its higher education, research and innovation landscape, with relevant modes of action.**

- C1. The research body runs research and innovation programmes that benefit all the stakeholders of its higher education, research and innovation environment, with relevant and recognised institutional positioning and modes of action.
- C2. The research body carries out major research and innovation projects with higher education, research and innovation partners at the local, regional and international level.
- C3. The research body conducts a policy of managing major research and innovation instruments that benefit all the stakeholders of the higher education, research and innovation system and, more broadly, the national, regional and/or international scientific community.
- C4. The research body plays a specific role in the implementation of public policies carried out by its supervising authority, if any, responsible for higher education, research and innovation.
- C5. The research body engages constructively with local research and higher education structures in order to find synergies and share resources, if requested by its supervising authority.
- C6. The research body develops synergies with leading higher education institutions in its fields of activity, if requested by its supervising authority.
- C7. There is a clear division of roles with other research bodies within the higher education, research and innovation system. The relationship is constructive and can lead to joint actions.

### **Standard 7: The research body actively contributes to the dynamics of the European Research Area (if the research body is part of it) and to the international influence of its country in research and innovation.**

Contributions to strengthening its participation and that of all research and innovation actors in the European Research Area

- C1. The research body implements an action plan to increase the participation of its teams in European research and innovation programmes.
- C2. The research body contributes to increasing the participation of higher education, research and innovation actors in European scientific and strategic bodies.
- C3. The research body pays attention to issues related to the protection of European scientific and technological heritage. It implements appropriate measures and actions to raise awareness among its teams.
- C4. The research body develops structuring partnerships in research and innovation with European actors. It plays a leading role in Europe in identified fields.



C5. The research body is involved in the implementation of public policies carried out by European organisations.

Contribution to its international development

C6. The research body implements an action plan to increase the participation of its teams in international research and innovation programmes.

C7. The research body is involved in the implementation of public policies carried out by international organisations.

C8. The research body develops structuring partnerships in research and innovation with international actors outside European programmes.

### **Standard 8: The research body implements a dynamic human resources policy that is adapted to its strategy and enhances its attractiveness.**

C1. The research body has a strong recruitment and attractiveness policy, as part of its strategy. It makes use of all possible recruitment channels. It attracts recognised talent from diverse backgrounds who have been trained in other structures.

C2. The research body implements a strong skills development policy adapted to its strategy. It pursues a policy aimed at promoting the internal and external mobility of its staff.

C3. The research body ensures that the contribution of each individual to their tasks is fully recognised in staff assessment and career development.

C4. The research body has a strong policy on gender balance in all its activities and at all levels of career development. It integrates anti-discrimination issues.

### **Standard 9: The research body has a vision for developing its resources and capacity.**

C1. The research body has a vision of the periodic evolution of its needs and resources, in line with its strategy.

C2. The research body sets up a career and skills planning policy, in line with its institutional strategy.

C3. The research body has an identified and sustainable business model, broken down into the different areas of activity.

C4. Prospective analyses are carried out to plan future resource diversification.

### **Standard 10: The research body implements a strong policy on research integrity, ethics, deontology and sustainable development to strengthen public trust in research**

C1. The research body has an active research integrity policy, including awareness and prevention activities, as well as mechanisms to identify and resolve cases of misconducts.

C2. The research body contributes to discussions on ethical issues related to its research and innovation activities, and conducts awareness campaigns among its staff.

C3. The research body ensures the quality of internal mechanisms and discussions on ethics, for all professions and all activities: research, innovation, expertise, support, etc.

C4. The research body implements the guidelines of its sustainable development strategy, with a particular focus on limiting the environmental impact of its activities.

C5. The research body protects the discoveries of its researchers and ensures effective protection against external interference. The research body pursues an active policy to protect its scientific and technological heritage.

## FIELD 4: ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

This field of evaluation is divided into eight standards that deal respectively with the qualitative, quantitative and ethical aspects of scientific output, innovation, supervision of PhD students and scientific expertise. The standards also cover the research body's activities with the socio-economic world. It also covers activities directed towards civil society and its interventions in the public sphere.

Budget management and support functions are analysed in this field.

Standards 14, 15 and 16 cover the research bodies that launch, evaluate and may also fund calls for proposals. These standards address the evaluation processes and the quality of the evaluators.

### Research

#### **Standard 11: The research body ensures the dynamism and development of its research activities and implements its scientific policy guidelines.**

C1. The research body assesses the quality of its scientific output in the international context of each research area. It identifies the main contributions and successes achieved during the reporting period.

C2. The research body expresses a vision of the evolution of its research activities over the last 5 or 10 years.

C3. The research body analyses the successes and limitations of the actions taken to implement its scientific policy guidelines, to strengthen support for research activities, and to encourage the emergence of new research thematics, eventually in rare disciplines, as well as risk-taking, interdisciplinarity and the development of young scientists.

C4. In cooperation with its university partners, the research body conducts a policy of support for PhD training, with a particular focus on the quality of the training and the employability of doctors. It ensures the follow-up of this policy.

C5. The research body analyses the results of its policy on the management of large scientific instruments.

C6. The research body pursues an open science policy and monitors its results. In particular, it implements the necessary methods and tools for managing and opening up research data.

C7. The research body has an editorial activity, as part of its open science policy.

### Innovation

#### **Standard 12: The research body implements its innovation policy guidelines and highlights its achievements.**

C1. The research body develops a culture of innovation within its teams and encourages risk-taking.

C2. The research body qualitatively and quantitatively assesses the results of its innovation activities. It identifies the major contributions and successes achieved during the reporting period and learns from its failures.

C3. The research body assesses the socio-economic impact of its activities.

C4. The research body analyses the successes and limitations of the actions carried out as part of its policy to support business relations: research agreements, industrial chairs, joint laboratories, multi-year

framework agreements, expert studies and consulting activities for companies, outreach activities, industrial theses, staff mobility, etc.

C5. The research body analyses the successes and limitations of the actions carried out as part of its transfer support policy: support mechanisms for project development, technology transfer, skills transfer, business creation, intellectual property management policy, contributions to standardisation work, education and training systems for research teams, etc.

C6. The research body is able to assess the quality of its partnerships with public or private structures in the field of innovation.

## Funding agencies

### **Standard 13: The assessment of the candidates' applications to calls for proposals meets quality criteria.**

C1. The criteria for assessing the scientific output of candidates are based on sound theoretical and methodological basis.

C2. The criteria for assessing the scientific output of the candidates are based on original scientific productions in peer-reviewed publications, co-authored with international partners, in accordance with the principles of the San Francisco Declaration ([DORA](#)).

C3. The research body assesses the candidates' ability to carry out their projects, in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposals.

### **Standard 14: The evaluation methods used to assess candidates' applications to calls for proposals respects the principles of research integrity, ethics, open science and the protection of scientific and technological heritage.**

C1. The research body's evaluation criteria cover research activities that respect all the rules and values of research integrity and ethics.

C2. The research body's evaluation criteria relate to research results that satisfy the respect for human and animal life.

C3. The research body's evaluation criteria respect the principles of open science.

C4. The research body provides researchers with the means enables researchers to protect their discoveries and ensures effective protection against external interference.

### **Standard 15: Candidates' applications to calls for proposals are reviewed by independent and scientifically recognised experts.**

C1. The research body sets up selection committees made up of recognised scientists with no conflict of interest with the candidates.

C2. The research body supports researchers and professors who publish regularly in international peer-reviewed journals and books.

## Expertise in support of public policies

### **Standard 16: The research body carries out scientific expertise activities in support of public policies conducted by the State, local authorities or by regional and international public bodies.**

C1. The research body assesses qualitatively and quantitatively its scientific expertise activities in support of public policy. It identifies the major contributions and successes achieved during the reporting period and assesses their impact.

C2. The research body analyses the successes and limitations of the actions taken to develop and enhance the recognition of these activities, with a particular focus on staff training, ethics and compliance with research integrity requirements.

C3. The research body engages the expertise of its academic partners in support of public policies.

C4. The research body implements a collective and institutional expertise approach.

C5. The research body is involved in the implementation of public policies, in partnership with the relevant public services or institutions.

## The inclusion of science in society

### **Standard 17: The research body implements the guidelines of its strategy for the inclusion of science in society and highlights its achievements.**

C1. The research body assesses qualitatively and quantitatively its outreach activities for the civil society, to a variety of audiences. It identifies the major contributions and successes achieved during the reporting period and assesses their impact.

C2. The research body develops and implements participatory science projects.

C3. The research body offers training courses for their researchers so they can better communicate as experts in the media and to a non-specialist audience, without compromising the requirements of research integrity.

C4. The research body analyses the successes and limitations of actions taken to develop and enhance the recognition of these activities.

## Support activities

### **Standard 18: The research body has efficient management processes and support functions.**

C1. The research body's budget structure and review processes are clear and consistent with its activities and strategy. They are discussed internally with all stakeholders.

C2. The human resources management processes are known, effective and adapted to the research body's strategy.

C3. The research body has information systems that are adapted to its strategic management and activities, both centrally and at the level of internal entities, and suitable for exchanges with partner institutions. The research body takes into account the security requirements of the information systems.

C4. The support functions are clearly organised, efficient and fit for purpose. The satisfaction of their internal users is periodically assessed.

C5. The research support functions within the research body are effective and appropriate.

C6. The real estate strategy is implemented in an efficient and relevant manner with regard to the research body's activities.

## FIELD 5: STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS FOR THE COMING YEARS

This field is about the research body's strategic orientations and objectives for the coming years.

**Standard 19: Based on its self-assessment for the reporting period, the research body puts forward a vision of its strategic orientations for the coming years and the main developments to be achieved during this period.**

C1. The research body sets up a clear and open working process to prepare its evaluation and to draw up its strategic plan, ensuring the participation of its staff and internal bodies, and involving its partners.

C2. The research body describes the evolution followed during the reporting period for its different activities and analyses its strengths and weaknesses and the main challenges for the coming years.

C3. The research body sets out a vision of strategic orientations and objectives for the coming years - until the next evaluation - including the topics and activities mentioned in fields 3 and 4 above.