



FOLLOW-UP REPORT ON THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF HCÉRES

February 2019

External Evaluation

March 7th 2016
Self-Evaluation Report

July 11th – 13th 2016
Evaluation Visit

February 13th 2017
External Evaluation Report

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INTRODUCTION

Hcéres was created by the Law of 22 July 2013 (the E.S.R Act) to replace the Agency for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (AERES). The law also had other significant impacts on the French higher education system, notably by replacing the formal approval of study programmes by an accreditation system.

The subsequent legislative and regulatory process continued through until October 2015, when the Hcéres Board and its new President were appointed. Between these two dates, which is to say during the two-year transition period, although it had taken its new name, Hcéres carried out its evaluation missions in accordance with the procedures previously defined by the AERES.

As of October 2015, once its new decision-making bodies were in place, Hcéres made modifications and constructed its own evaluation process and methodologies, integrating the new ESG and pursuing the renewal of the institution.

The external evaluation took place in July 2016, based on a self-assessment report that had been published in April 2016. This process was conceived as a collective moment for sharing experience and improvements to be made, and constituted a key step for continued European and international recognition. Traditionally, Hcéres (like the AERES before it) is called upon by foreign institutions and agencies to share its experience or conduct evaluations, and this activity, which is growing regularly, draws considerable legitimacy from European recognition.

Aware as it is of these issues and of the prospect of a second evaluation, Hcéres has undertaken this process of self-evaluation and then external evaluation as an intrinsic part of its own development. Far from standing still as an institution, in the course of its first years of activity in 2016 and 2017, Hcéres has developed its own tools and shaped its own identity. Although at the time of the 2016 external evaluation, on account of its short existence, Hcéres was still applying many procedures inherited from the AERES, the High Council has now renewed all its quality systems in line with its quality policy and strategy.

I. MAJOR CHANGES SINCE THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION IN 2016

REPLACEMENT OF FORMAL APPROVAL BY ACCREDITATION OF HEI'S STUDY PROGRAMMES PROVISION

Article 37 of the E.S.R. Act (Article 613-1 of the Education Code) introduced a new procedure for the examination of the provision of study programmes. An accreditation of the institution's whole study programmes provision procedure replaced the one-by-one approval of degrees. The Order of 22 January 2014 setting out the accreditation procedures for higher education institutions implies authorisation of the latter to issue the national degrees set out in the list annexed to the order.

The range of study programmes is simplified with the suppression of subspecialisms and application of programme title classifications. The institutions are free to organise their study programmes by introducing standard training pathways which they may modify at their discretion.

In order to guarantee the quality of national degrees, the ministry refers, during the accreditation procedure, to a national study programme framework allowing national regulation that is demanding while also respecting the autonomy of the institutions.

Dialogue between the State and the operators is now focused on training strategy, taking account of the teaching, organisational and financial aspects. The institution that defines its study programme strategy must also demonstrate its ability to implement it.

In the interests of simplification, it has been decided that for study programmes, Hcéres will henceforth evaluate the review of the previous period and the project for the next period.

ADAPTING EVALUATION TO THE NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

Faced with this change, HCERES has adapted its process which is now named the "evaluation and appraisal process for the accreditation of bachelor's or master's degree study programmes." It is a process in two distinct phases, consisting initially in conducting an ex-post (outcomes of the past period) / ex-ante (prospects) evaluation of each study programme, and then giving an opinion on the study programmes provision project of the institution for the next period.

These two phases are based on a structuring of the study programmes provision into "cluster of study programmes". The manner in which the study provision is organised into clusters of study programmes is defined by the institution at its own discretion. A cluster is a set of study programmes and may be presented by a single institution, by several institutions or at the level of a site (cluster of HEI).

The scope of the external evaluation of study programmes mainly concerns academic disciplines in which national bachelor's, vocational bachelor's and master's degrees are awarded, in addition to certain programmes leading to bachelor's or master's equivalent degrees for graduates.

Study programme ex-post (outcomes of the past period) / ex-ante (prospects) evaluation phase:

1. Self-evaluation by the institution:

The institution compiles a file for each study programme in the current period. Each file contains a summary of the study programme's self-evaluation according to the system in operation in the institution, accompanied by quantitative data concerning the study programme and the prospects for improvement and/or development.

The institution is asked to structure its study programmes provision into "cluster of study programmes" at its discretion. A specific file must be submitted for each cluster of study programmes submitted by the institution. In addition to listing the study programmes grouped together in the cluster, a cluster file provides contextual information which explains the presence of this cluster and, if possible, includes a review of the organisation and operation of this cluster for the previous period. It may also

present the prospects or strategic, organisational and operational objectives associated with the cluster.

2. Each study programme file is analysed by a “reviewer”. On the sole basis of the self-evaluation file provided by Hcéres, this reviewer draws up **an evaluation sheet** for the study programme against the Hcéres standard.

3. For each cluster of study programmes, Hcéres forms a “panel of experts”. It is typically composed of a chair, four academic experts, a student and, if the cluster has a known professional or cultural dimension, a representative of the socio-economic or cultural world. Each study programme file is analysed by a “reviewer” and by a member of the panel. The panel then conducts a cross-cutting analysis of all the study programmes. This twofold evaluation of the cluster aims to analyse the relevance, consistency and potential of the field, as well as the quality of the study programmes that compose it.

The panel produces a provisional evaluation report under the responsibility of its chair. This report is accompanied by an evaluation sheet for each study programme in the cluster. The report comprises a section with “focal points”, highlighting those points for which the panel requests follow-up in the project. This report is transmitted to the institution.

4. This phase ends by a visit to the institution. This serves to present the analyses of the experts to the actors in the institution, to finalise the reports and to accompany the institution in putting together its accreditation project. The visiting committee (drawn from the field of study panels) meets the institutional representatives of the institution and then the heads of the study programmes.

Further to the visit, the cluster of study reports are finalised and sent to the institution, which may submit its comments. They are then published on the Hcéres website

Project analysis phase:

This phase consists in analysing the study programme provision being considered by the institution for accreditation for the next period. It is not an evaluation of the schedules of the future study programmes (which are not requested), but an analysis of the new project for study programme provision.

A single file (known as the accreditation file) is submitted by the institution in accordance with a calendar that will depend on the state of progress of the review evaluations (typically two months after the publication of the cluster evaluation reports). This file mainly consists of a presentation of the contextual aspects underlying the new range of study programmes, and a presentation of the programmes proposed for accreditation.

On the basis of *ex-post* evaluations, the focal points that were noted and the accreditation file, a panel of experts gives an opinion on the changes to the overall provision that are being considered and issues an accreditation opinion (positive, positive with recommendations, positive with a mid-term examination, negative) for each study programme.

The panel of experts for the study programmes provision project is made up of the various chairs of the review evaluation panel, a student representative and a professional representative.

The report on the project is sent to the institution for its comments. The report with comments is then transmitted to the DGESIP which finalises and prepares the administrative accreditation instrument after submission to the CNESER. The report is published on the Hcéres website.

II. FOLLOW-UP OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION IN 2016

ESG 3.3

Recommendation of the panel

The panel recommends Hcéres to consider further developing its procedure for non-conflict of interest, in order to help easily detect and prevent potential conflicts of interests. This may be achieved by including in the expert's declaration of interests explicit definition of a conflict of interest in the context of the agency work. In addition, panels' independence can be reinforced by providing a written guidance on what may constitute a conflict of interest in evaluator's work, how it can be detected and avoided, including examples from the agency's practice.

Pursuant to the Hcéres Strategic Plan 2016-2020, which places the emphasis on the training of its experts and personnel, action has been taken to raise awareness of the notion of conflicts of interest among all the stakeholders in evaluation, and to improve the way it is taken into consideration. Hcéres has developed a short explanatory video (2'30") defining and illustrating a conflict or proximity of interest and how this can impact the recognition and legitimacy of the evaluations that are conducted. The main objective of this video is to help make each actor aware that they may have a conflict of interest when they are taking part in an evaluation, to encourage them to inform the Hcéres teams of any such possible links and to fill out the personal declaration of interest introduced by Hcéres at the time of its creation.

It also reminds internal staff that the analysis of any possible conflicts of interest is an essential step in the panel formation process. The online publication of this video was accompanied by the publication of an internal memo explaining how to use the video for training experts and on the procedures for handling feedback from them on any possible conflicts of interest.

The video is shown on induction of any new scientific, technical or administrative staff. Discussions and exchanges are organised during these sessions to make sure that everyone has understood this notion and its importance.

French version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4bDHznLKQI>

English version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2AvCkzQnF0>

ESG 3.4

Recommendation of the panel

The panel recommends that Hcéres should better utilise information gathered from institutional and programme evaluations, in order to show the progress and problems encountered by higher education institutions and reinforce the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes through the publication of regular analytical reports

When Hcéres was created to succeed the AERES, a new department was created in 2015, the DECT (Department of Evaluation of Clusters of Higher Education and Research Institutions). These clusters or territorial coordinations are groupings of higher education institutions (universities and schools) and research bodies in a given territory. They can take a number of forms: Communities of Universities and Establishments (COMUE), mergers of establishments, associations or any combination of these three. These forms of groupings are set to diversify further in the near future with the notion of experimental institutions and that of "convergence".

As soon as it was created, the DECT set about restructuring the evaluations conducted by Hcéres by organising an integrated process involving all the evaluation departments (DECT, DEE, DEF and DER), as well as the Hcéres Science and Technology Observatory (OST).

This process comprises two successive phases: one phase consisting in evaluating all the entities included within the scope of the territorial coordination (study programmes, doctoral schools, research units, institutions and the territorial coordination of the site), followed by another phase producing analytical reports (drawing up one analytical of the evaluations of study programmes and doctoral schools, one for research and one for the institutions). The analytical report production phase culminates in an **integrated evaluation analytical**

report for the site drawing on all the previous summary reports and highlighting the key challenges for the future development of the site in question.

Given the quantity of evaluation reports that are used to draw up these analytical reports and the time necessary beforehand to conduct the evaluations, this process takes a minimum of 18 to 20 months. On account of this, at the time of the external evaluation visit to Hcéres in 2016, when it had been in activity for less than one year, this process had not been completed for any sites. An experimentation of this process was conducted and finalised for a pilot site in 2018. Since then, this process has been applied to each site evaluated by Hcéres and the analytical reports will be published once they have been completed. They provide assistance for local, regional and national actors and decision makers in implementing public policies in higher education and research. They will provide an insight into the progress recorded on the sites and any difficulties they may encounter.

A second action is being undertaken by Hcéres to produce cross-cutting analyses of the different evaluation reports that are published, for the purpose of contributing to public debate on the development of higher education and research. For example, an overall analysis of the evaluation reports for the 26 clusters of institutions is being considered at the end of the first full evaluation cycle for the purpose of reviewing the approach adopted by the department in light of the organisation arrangements and competencies of the territorial coordinations.

ESG 3.5

Recommendation of the panel

Hcéres could revise the roles and responsibilities attached to scientific delegates in order to curtail the cost of the universities' contribution to external quality assurance.

The scope of the entities to be evaluated by Hcéres is increasing regularly (study programmes in health, study programmes under the supervision of the Ministry for Culture, etc.). The budget that is allocated, however, does not take account of this increase, thereby posing issues of material and human resources for Hcéres.

To reinforce its teams, Hcéres calls upon scientific staff to supervise its evaluations. Since 2018, a new recruitment procedure for such scientific staff has been introduced. In addition to the 'Scientific Advisors' (CS), formerly referred to as Scientific Delegates, who are at the disposal of Hcéres for a defined portion of their working time (1 to 3 days a week), Hcéres now also uses the services of 'Scientific Project Managers' (CMS). This less costly, more flexible status makes it possible to adapt the number of Hcéres scientific staff more precisely to the quantity of entities to be evaluated.

For the evaluation campaign 2017-2018 (group D), 39 such Scientific Project Managers were mobilised, and 32 for evaluation campaign 2018-2019 (group E).

ESG 3.6

Recommendation of the panel

Hcéres should publish its internal quality assurance policy on its website.

It should also avoid changing the methodology every year and consolidate various internal quality assurance tools, both common and specific, into a single Handbook.

The transition from AERES to Hcéres was a long process. Although the law creating Hcéres was published in July 2013, the President and its new board were appointed only in October 2015.

Since that date, the new presidency has set about constructing the identity of Hcéres, with the aim of communicating more widely about its values, principles and objectives. After several months of work, this new communication policy resulted in the new website of the Agency going online in February 2019. The architecture of the website was designed with the focus on transparency and on informative and educational content. The Hcéres quality policy and approach now occupy a prominent place on the website.

<https://www.hceres.fr/en/quality-approach>

Hcéres has always applied a quality assurance cycle to its methodologies, standards and organisation. When the ENQA panel refers to "changing the methodology every year", it does not specify that the changes are "marginal" improvements to details or wording in order to be more precise and improve the systems implemented, and that these changes have been identified through the annual feedback. These are non-

substantial changes that respect the continuity of the existing processes and therefore do not create any differences between previous evaluations and those that follow.

Given the size of the French higher education system, Hcéres covers the whole of the scope within its remit over a period of 5 years. Limiting improvements to once every five years would be less efficient and would also contradict the message that Hcéres is striving to get across to higher education institutions, which is that quality assurance is a continuous, and not an episodic, activity.

When Hcéres makes more substantial modifications, these are almost always induced by changes to the legislative or regulatory context of French higher education, which Hcéres cannot evade.

The continuous improvement cycle on which the operation of Hcéres is based guarantees the relevance and adequacy of its evaluations. It also allows Hcéres to fulfil its public missions while taking account of changes to its environment.

Concerning the panel's suggestion that the internal quality assurance tools should be grouped together in a single handbook, the page on the new website on internal quality assurance at Hcéres fulfils this purpose.

ESG 3.7

Recommendation of the panel

The agency should regard external periodic reviews more constructively and use their findings to reflect on its policies and activities.

Since the very beginnings of the agency (AERES and Hcéres), the annual cycle of preparation, organisation and execution of the evaluation campaigns has always been based on a continuous improvement approach drawing on annual feedback, resulting in the periodic introduction of changes and improvements. In 2010, the first external evaluation of the AERES was particularly keenly awaited in order to verify and consolidate the evaluation processes implemented by the Agency, and its organisation.

Likewise, in 2016, the recommendations issued by the panel of experts were the subject of extensive internal discussions, and when they were deemed to be relevant and realistic given the context of Hcéres, its objectives and its commitments to its stakeholders, they gave rise to corrective action or even to larger-scale projects. The thorough revision of the study programme evaluation process to include students in the evaluation panels and the progress made in the training of experts testify to the importance given to the recommendations made by the experts.

ESG 2.1

Recommendation of the panel

Hcéres should further review and revise its external quality assurance processes and the various standards and criteria used for them, in order to fully address the requirements of ESG Part 1. This particularly concerns external quality assurance of programme design and approval and the development of teaching staff.

The whole study programme evaluation process has been completely revised since the full implementation of accreditation in France. (See I. Major changes since the external evaluation in 2016)

This change provided the opportunity to pursue the revision of the standards used for this process in order to address the requirements of ESG Part 1 more completely.

Concerning the professional development of teaching staff, the Hcéres standards take account of the fact that the universities only have limited room for manoeuvre in light of the particular status of teaching staff in French higher education, which is defined by the regulations. However, one evaluation criterion examines whether, within the framework of the study programmes, the team heading the programme ensures that the teaching staff that are used have adequate skills.

In parallel, the standard for institutional evaluations has been revised for Group E (2018-2019) to give greater consideration to the mechanisms for designing study programmes by a skills-based and an occupation-based approach, and to the training of teaching staff (standards 17, 18, 20 and 24).

Recommendation of the panel

Hcéres should revise the complex structure, definitions, language and style of its quality assurance standards and criteria with a view to providing clarity and consistency of approach.

At the time of the 2016 external evaluation, this action had already been widely applied to the Hcéres standards. The panel of experts lauded this restructuring of the reference system into explicit standards and criteria. This structure has been well received by the evaluated entities and by the experts taking part in evaluations. Hcéres has also extended the use of this structure of standards in the course of its successive internal revisions and all the standards apply this model today.

Thanks to feedback from all the stakeholders, the quality cycle applied at Hcéres also allows the wording of the standards to be modified when they are not sufficiently clear or explicit, without substantially modifying the approach.

Recommendation of the panel

The agency is advised to revise its processes and standards for evaluation of cross-border and foreign higher education, considering the Toolkit on quality assurance of CBHE for agencies and HEIs and the agreed standards for quality assurance of joint programmes, approved by EHEA Ministers in May 2015.

Regarding the Toolkit on quality assurance of CBHE for agencies and HEIs, Hcéres must point out that it is one of the main authors of this document and the evaluations it performs take account of its recommendations.

Concerning the European approach adopted in Yerevan, its implementation is more complex as it requires close collaboration with the evaluation bodies in the countries involved. Given the diverse quality assurance systems implemented in the European countries (ex-ante systems, ex-post systems, institutional evaluations, study programme evaluations, accreditation, etc.) the preliminary work required on cooperation is considerable and is not a matter solely for Hcéres. Hcéres is quite ready, however, to cooperate with those organisations that wish to move forward in this process.

ESG 2.2

Recommendation of the panel

The panel encourages Hcéres to open up to external stakeholders by systematically involving them in the assessment and design of its methodologies through various working groups and committees.

Hcéres has built its legitimacy and recognition among the French higher education and research area by cooperating with them while preserving its independence and to the need to work effectively with the evaluation's stakeholders. The different kinds of stakeholders are all represented on the Hcéres board, the main responsibility of which is to approve the methodologies and standards implemented by Hcéres.

Concerning the evaluations, the institution evaluation panels systematically include a representative of the socio-professional world and a student representative. The study programme evaluation panels systematically include a student representative and, whenever the study programmes have a professional dimension, a representative of the socio-professional world.

On a more operational note, the Hcéres teams include Scientific Advisors delegated by their universities, schools or research bodies from the French higher education and research area. By joining Hcéres, even for a limited portion of their working time, they commit to uphold its values and take part in its activities. In this capacity, they participate fully in the work to revise the methodologies and standards or even to develop new activities.

Before final approval by the Hcéres board, such work always includes a consultation of the stakeholders (for example the Conference of University Presidents (CPU) representing the universities).

Regarding the revision of these processes, Hcéres organises regular feedback with the relevant stakeholders: supervising ministries, evaluated entities and experts.

It should be noted that a dialogue has also been initiated with the CTI for the evaluation of institutions, with a view to simplifying the process for evaluating engineering schools, whose diplomas are evaluated by the CTI.

This dialogue has resulted in the implementation of a coordinated and simplified process between our two agencies.

Involving external stakeholders systematically as members of working groups does not seem relevant to us at the moment, nor necessary in order to comply with ESG standard 2.2, as Hcéres has established open relationships with its environment, based on dialogue and transparency, as well as an Hcéres/CPU (Conference of University Presidents) standing collaborative working group on the evaluation of institutions.

ESG 2.3

Recommendation of the panel

Hcéres should encourage institutions to follow up its panels' recommendations by including options for follow-up of recommendations in evaluation reports.

The issue of the follow-up of evaluations by the Hcéres, and previously by the AERES, has been the subject of regular discussions with the evaluation's stakeholders, and in particular with the evaluated entities. The integrated evaluation process the entities go through and the duration of that process represent a considerable workload that Hcéres is constantly striving to reduce.

The progress made by Hcéres in terms of simplification has enabled us to move forward on this issue in agreement with the evaluated entities.

Concerning the evaluation of institutions, 2 new items have been introduced:

- since Group D (2017-2018), standard 7 in the institution evaluation standard has included the following criterion: "The quality assurance policy of the institution includes, where applicable, follow-up of the recommendations from the previous evaluation by Hcéres (or by other bodies)".
- from Group E (2018-2019), an additional step has been inserted into the evaluation process. At the midway point, Hcéres sends the institutions and territorial coordinations a letter asking them to provide their feedback on the follow-up of the recommendations made by the experts.

Concerning study programmes evaluation, the implementation of the accreditation process, instead of the former formal approval, has allowed the inclusion of follow-up of the recommendations made by the panels. (See § 1.). The analysis of the project files for accreditation examines whether the institutions have made a relevant response to the recommendations made in the evaluation of the ex-post (outcomes of the past period) / ex-ante (prospects).

Recommendation of the panel

Hcéres should consider revising its flexible approach to the selection of standards for self-evaluation to ensure comparability and consistency of its published reports.

In France, the evaluation of higher education and research institutions is conducted according to a single external evaluation standard, whatever the type of institution (universities, schools, etc.) or its size.

The "flexibility" referred to in the recommendation applied at two different levels. When an institution could demonstrate, by its nature or the field of its activities, that a standard did not apply to it, it could choose not to develop that point in its self-evaluation. For example, the institution standard contains references to the relations of the institution with the University Hospital, but some universities do not have medical study programmes and have no relations with the University Hospital. In addition, to empower the institutions and respect their autonomy in internal quality assurance matters, Hcéres allowed the institutions the freedom to construct their self-evaluation report according to their own structure, provided that they addressed all the points in the standard.

Further to this recommendation, however, each institution is now asked to draft its self-evaluation report in accordance with the structure of the Hcéres standard for institutional evaluation. The "Guidelines for Self-Evaluation" document has been reworded to include this demand. It also places the emphasis on the need for the institution to produce analyses and evidence for all its standards. The evaluation report, meanwhile, strictly follows the plan of the standard for the external evaluation of institutions, organised into 6 areas. For all the universities in the French system, the standard is always the same and no adaptation is possible.

ESG 2.4

Recommendation of the panel

Hcéres is encouraged to publish on the website the agency's policy and criteria for nomination and appointment of experts.

The culmination of the Hcéres multimedia communication policy with the online publication of its new website (in February 2019), offers far greater possibilities for sharing information in an educational way, as mentioned in the response to Recommendation 3.6.

A whole area of the site is now dedicated to Hcéres experts. It provides a clear presentation of the composition of Hcéres expert panels, of the principle of peer evaluation and of the role of the expert. A document approved by the Hcéres board is also available in this part of the website, setting out the rules for the selection of experts and their recruitment process.

www.hceres.fr

Finally, in order to share the quality culture more widely, and more particularly the role of the expert in evaluation, and to achieve better awareness within the academic community and even among the general public, an educational video has been developed. It presents some of the principles of the selection of experts, their role, and the composition and working of the panels.

Video in French: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWDPD2mu920>

Video in English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAhagJsPCvg>

Recommendation of the panel

The Agency should consider active involvement of international experts in review panels by developing and implementing a consistent approach to their selection and recruitment, including for the evaluations abroad.

The participation of foreign experts in the Hcéres evaluation panel has been systematic for the evaluation of French institutions since 2010.

This is now also the case for all evaluations conducted outside national territory, by the Europe and International Department (DEI).

For study programme review panels, international competency is sought to the extent possible among the academic experts when forming the panel.

Recommendation of the panel

Hcéres should involve students and employer representatives in the panels for all types of evaluations and strengthen their role as equal members and ensuring proper and regular training.

Whatever the type of evaluation process, there are only two different statuses for Hcéres experts, which each imply different responsibilities within the panel: that of panel chair and that of expert.

Within a given panel, no distinction is made among the experts. Each of them has the responsibility to contribute to the evaluation and its preparation, and to drafting the report. Students and representatives of the socio-economic sector are fully-fledged members of the panel.

Further to the recent reform of the study programme evaluation process, it now includes a site visit. A panel is formed for this purpose. It includes a student and a representative of the socio-economic sector.

To complete the expert training system, Hcéres has created a working group in charge of proposing improvement actions.

These include three new types of offering:

- Short, public educational videos contributing to acculturation and awareness-raising of the public, including of experts, on certain principles relating to evaluation activities, among other things (e.g. conflicts of interest video, Hcéres' experts video).
- The organisation of webinars, or online conferences, dedicated to training experts in the evaluation process and in drafting reports and analysis grids.
- The provision of training videos on request for experts. For example, a training course has been put together for experts working on the evaluation of study programmes, based on the structure of the study programme evaluation sheet. A video has been developed for each item on the sheet, making

a total of 7 videos, accompanied by an introductory video and a conclusion video. The total duration of the course is 41'29" (link to one of the 9 videos making up the course): <https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/9036500533674953474>)

These tools are being rolled out gradually alongside the face-to-face training sessions at Hcéres or at the beginning of visits, in order to enhance the educational content provided to experts, diversify the learning methods and make them accessible to experts when they are available.

ESG 2.5

Recommendation of the panel

Hcéres should refine outcome criteria for different evaluations, in order to ensure consistency in their application by different panels and institutions.

The different evaluation processes implemented by Hcéres have different focuses:

The institutional dimension of the establishment or territorial coordinations, the overall range of study programmes, the clusters of study programmes or the research units. These imply different levels of responsibility and different remits. The Hcéres standards take account of this and are perfectly tailored to their specific requirements. However, they have all been developed according to a common template, that is divided into areas, each of which is then made up of standards illustrated by various qualitative criteria.

This common structure makes it easier for the evaluated entities and different experts taking part to understand the standards.

ESG 2.7

Recommendation of the panel

The panel recommends Hcéres to coordinate its complaints procedure with accrediting and contracting ministries, in order to promote a coherent approach to complaints and appeals.

The panel recommends Hcéres to get its complaints committee ready for work as soon as possible, in order to be able to take account of the adequacy and effectiveness of its new methodology.

At the time of the ENQA visit, the whole of the system for the new complaints committee, which is to say its rules of procedure and its composition, were pending approval by the Hcéres board.

They were approved on 3 October 2016. They have since been published on the Hcéres website. Since that date, no complaints have been filed with Hcéres.

A reminder should be provided here of the link between Hcéres evaluations and the supervising ministries. The evaluation reports are used by the supervising ministries, generally between 6 months and one year after their publication and along with other materials, to make decisions (on allocating resources, accreditation, etc.) Other documents and indicators are used by the ministries in the decision-making process.

The respective responsibilities are therefore clearly defined and in matters of complaints:

- When evaluated entities have a complaint pertaining to an evaluation report or the evaluation process, they send that complaint/claim to Hcéres.
- When evaluated entities have a complaint or claim pertaining to a decision (contract with their supervising ministry on objectives and resources, accreditation decision, etc.), they send that complaint/claim directly to the supervising ministry.

In light of its remit, Hcéres must not interfere in the negotiation processes between the institutions and ministries.

In addition, while Hcéres strives to maintain active and efficient cooperation relationships with the Ministry for Higher Education, Research and Innovation, it would appear that the panel's suggestion that the complaints procedure should be coordinated with the ministry might give the impression that Hcéres allows the supervising ministries to intervene in the results of its evaluations. This would be seriously detrimental to the independence that is necessary for the evaluation missions entrusted to Hcéres and to the recognition accorded to the High Council by the French community.

High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education

Hcéres is the independent administrative authority responsible for evaluating all structures of higher education and research, or validating evaluation procedures conducted by other bodies.

Through its analyzes, evaluations and recommendations, it accompanies, advises and supports the process of improving the quality of higher education and research in France.

Independence, transparency and fairness are its values. Its method? It is based on its commitment to the entities evaluated. To be with them, a partner of progress.



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