



INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

Adopted by the Hcéres Board
on the 1st of March 2021

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Accreditation refers to the recognition by Hcéres, after evaluation that a higher education institution or study programme is competent to carry out its missions. Just like evaluation, accreditation is based on a set of standards that define specific quality system and technical competency requirements. Hcéres issues a report based on the results of the prior evaluation and the extent to which the actual conditions observed differ from the standard requirements, and decides whether or not to accredit the institution or study programme.

Hcéres has an Accreditation Commission that is responsible for conducting its accreditation activities for foreign institutions and study programmes. Its work begins once the evaluation phase has been completed and the evaluation report is considered to be in its final version. Evaluation and accreditation are two separate phases and the Accreditation Commission must be independent of the panel of experts that conducted the evaluation. Accreditation is taken to mean the issuance of an "Hcéres accreditation label" which certifies the quality of a study programme or institution. It does not infer equivalence with a French qualification. To enable the Accreditation Commission to do its work, accreditation criteria are defined by Hcéres and apply to all accreditation applications. They are sent to the institution.

1 - ATTRIBUTIONS

The Commission carries out the accreditation phase in three possible cases: in the event of an initial or renewal application, in the event of a follow-up, or in the event of the suspension/revocation of an accreditation.

1.1- Initial accreditation or renewal application

The Commission studies the final evaluation report and the proposal by the panel of experts in the light of the accreditation criteria, before making one of the following three decisions:

- 5-year accreditation.
- Conditional accreditation with mandatory follow-up after 3 years.
- Refusal to grant accreditation.

1.2 – Follow-up

At the end of the accreditation follow-up procedure, the Accreditation Commission studies the follow-up report and the new proposal of the panel of experts on accreditation, before making one of the following decisions:

- Extension of the accreditation to the end of the 5-year term,
- Refusal to grant accreditation.

1.3 - Suspension of the accreditation procedure or revocation of an accreditation decision.

The institution gives an undertaking to act at all times as a loyal and honest partner of the Accreditation Commission within the meaning of Article 1104 of the French Civil Code and, in particular, to inform the Accreditation Commission promptly of any factor or difficulty liable to influence the accreditation process.

In the event of any breaches¹, there are two possible cases according to when the facts become known:

- 1 - prior to the award of accreditation: suspension of the procedure underway
- 2 – following the award of accreditation: revocation of the accreditation following further deliberation by the Accreditation Commission.

Following a contradictory procedure, the revocation decision will be reasoned and published on the Hcéres website.

The decision may be appealed by the procedure provided in Annex 2 of the Evaluation Agreement and in Article 6 of the Rules of Procedure of the International Accreditation Commission.

2 - COMPOSITION AND APPOINTMENT

The Accreditation Commission is a standing committee made up of representatives of Hcéres, of the Hcéres Board and qualified personalities.

2.1 - Hcéres representatives

- the Commission is chaired by the Hcéres President;
- the Director of the Europe and International Department is the permanent rapporteur;
- depending on the nature of the entity to be evaluated, the Director of the Evaluation of Study Programmes Department or the Director of the Evaluation of Institutions Department.

2.2 - Hcéres Board representatives

At least three representatives of the Hcéres Board, including one student and one member representing a foreign quality assurance agency sit on the Accreditation Commission.

2.3 – Qualified personalities

These two members are selected as representatives of the French and international higher education system:

- one University Vice President for International Relations;
- one representative of a higher education institution.

¹ in the following cases:

- act contrary to the European principles of higher education,
- circulation of misleading or incorrect information,
- breach of trust,
- behaviour of a fraudulent nature,
- more generally, any action, or inaction, displaying disloyal behaviour and bad faith.

The members of the Accreditation Commission are appointed by the Hcéres President for a four-year renewable term. If any member of the Accreditation Commission loses the title for which he/she was appointed to the Commission, he/she shall be replaced for the remainder of his/her term of office.

3 - FUNCTIONING

The Commission is convened by its President and meets, as necessary, at the headquarters of Hcéres. Except in the event of an emergency, it convenes on the same day as the Hcéres Board. Its work is governed by the same principles of professionalism, independence and ethical standards as all other Hcéres work. In the event of a conflict of interest between a member of the Commission and the evaluated entity, the person in question is replaced.²

The Commission's deliberations may only be considered valid if an absolute majority of its members in office are present, a total of 5 members out of 9. If the absolute majority is not reached by the time set for the Commission meeting, the meeting shall be postponed by at least half a day, without the need for a quorum.

The secretariat of the International Accreditation Commission is provided by the Secretary-General or their representative.

- Proxy votes are not permitted.
- The Commission meets in private.
- Participation by video-conferencing may be possible on a secure circuit.
- Members of the Commission are bound to a strict obligation of confidentiality.
- Members of the Commission undertake to inform the Commission President, prior to the presentation of each application, of any fact or situation that may be considered liable to influence their independence or impartiality.
- Accreditation decisions are published on the Hcéres website.

4 – ACCREDITATION APPLICATION APPRAISAL PROCEDURE

4.1 - The President:

- He chairs the meetings and discussions of the Accreditation Commission and participates in discussions and decisions.
- He puts the accreditation decision to a vote.
- He signs the final accreditation decision.
- He notifies the institution of the Commission's decision concerning the requested accreditation.
- He enforces the Commission's decision and closes the procedure.

4.2 – Commission members:

- They conduct the study and analysis of the applications submitted for meetings of the Accreditation Commission.
- They participate in sessions of the Accreditation Commission and take part in a collegial manner in the decisions on all the accreditation applications submitted.

4.3 - The rapporteur

- The Director of the Europe and International Department or their representative acts as the rapporteur of the Commission.
- He assists the President in drawing up the agenda for the meetings; he assists and informs the President during meetings

During the meeting of the Accreditation Commission, in order to enlighten the Commission members on any points that do not appear in the evaluation report, notably on matters relating to the coherence and context of the evaluation process, the rapporteur of the Commission is in possession of all the documents used during the evaluation process.

The rapporteur of the Commission presents the evaluation file of the institution or study programme under review and the accreditation opinion put forward by the experts of the evaluation committee, as well as the response made by the institution to the final evaluation report. These three documents will have been sent for examination to the Commission members, along with the invitation to the Commission meeting.

4.4 - The secrétariat

- It organises and prepares the documents required for meetings.
- It takes note of either the acceptance of the opinion or its modification on each of the criteria studied and proposes to the President the final decision to be put to the vote.
- During voting, it performs the vote count.

It has the Commission's decision and its reasoning published on the Hcéres website.

4.5 - Stages of the appraisal procedure for an initial application or accreditation renewal:

In the case of a study programme, the accreditation aims to verify compliance with the accreditation criteria within the following areas:

- Purpose
- Positioning within the environment
- Educational organisation
- Management

In the case of an institution, the accreditation aims to verify compliance with the accreditation criteria within the following areas:

- Strategy and governance
- Research and training
- The student pathway
- External relations
- Management
- Quality and ethics

The Accreditation Commission assesses, on the basis of the evaluation report and the proposed accreditation opinion, the ability of an institution or a study programme to fulfil its missions and, ultimately, recognition by Hcéres of this ability.

Based upon these documents, an open discussion takes place on the compliance of the institution or study programme with each of the accreditation criteria.

The Accreditation Commission has a scale for assessing the level of compliance with the accreditation criteria in view of the evaluation report and it issues an opinion for each criterion. This assessment scale is as follows:

- Very good: the study programme/institution satisfies the accreditation criteria fully, has implemented exemplary practices and displays a very good level of quality.
- Good: the study programme/institution satisfies the accreditation criteria and displays a good level of quality.
- Acceptable: the study programme/institution satisfies the required accreditation criteria and displays an acceptable level of quality.

1.2-

- Unsatisfactory: the study programme/institution does not satisfy the required accreditation criteria and displays serious weaknesses.

The Commission makes a decision, criterion by criterion, either accepting the proposed opinion or proposing modifications to the opinion during the meeting. The rapporteur takes note either of the acceptance of the opinion or of its modification.

In reasoning the accreditation decision, it is important to consider the following:

- Assessments must be based on the data collected and sufficient evidence.
- Reasons must be directly consistent with the evidence submitted in the evaluation report and include clear and precise references to the evaluated points.
- Reasons must always refer solely to the established criteria and observations, and comments unrelated to these must be avoided.
- Reasons for the accreditation decision must avoid comparisons between the study programme or institution being evaluated and any other study programmes or institutions, and be focused on the diagnosis of the study programme or institution being evaluated within the framework of the established accreditation model.

1.3-

- Reasons must not be ambiguous and must be coherent with each other.
- Reasons are to be worded in an impersonal and objective manner and derogatory terms or categorical expressions may not be used.

4.6 - Stages of the accreditation follow-up procedure:

This procedure takes place when the entity has already been accredited subject to mandatory follow-up at the end of 3 years. After this period, there are two possible cases:

- Follow-up without a visit: if the initial Accreditation Commission made recommendations that do not require a follow-up visit, the institution sends Hcéres a follow-up report on the remediation measures undertaken; this report is then examined by the Accreditation Commission,
- Follow-up with a visit: if the initial Accreditation Commission made recommendations requiring a follow-up visit, Hcéres organises a visit with the institution, focusing on the weak points requiring remediation measures; the panel of experts can be of a different size to that of the initial panel and organised in accordance with the areas of weakness to be examined; prior to the visit, the institution will have sent a follow-up report on the remediation measures undertaken; the experts will have acquainted themselves with this report prior to the visit. Upon completion of the on-site visit, the panel of experts will draw up an evaluation report targeting the points requiring remediation, as well as a proposed accreditation opinion.

On the basis of the first evaluation report, the follow-up report and the progression that the rapporteur of the session has been able to observe and present to the Commission, an open discussion takes place with regard to current compliance of the institution or study programme with each of the accreditation criteria.

The Accreditation Commission uses the same assessment scale as that used in point 4.5. It issues an opinion on each of the criteria.

The Accreditation Commission uses the same assessment scale as that used in point 4.5. It issues an opinion on each of the criteria.

4.7 - Stages of the accreditation suspension or revocation procedure:

This procedure takes place in the specific cases mentioned in point 1.3, notably in the event of a breach by the evaluated entity of its obligations of good faith. Two cases apply according to when the facts become known:

- 1 - prior to the award of accreditation: suspension of the procedure underway
- 2 - after the award of accreditation: revocation of the accreditation.

If Hcéres is made aware of facts of the type leading to suspension of the procedure underway or revocation of the accreditation, the case is referred to the Commission at the initiative and request of the Director of the Europe and International Department. As a first step, the Director of the Europe and International Department outlines the situation in writing to the entity concerned. As a second step, the latter has a period of one month in which to respond to the allegations stated in the letter and to shed light on the facts or conduct criticised.

On the basis of this exchange of correspondence and the information provided by the rapporteur at the session, the Commission discusses the decision to be made. Explicit reasons are given for this decision.

5 – DECISION-MAKING

5.1 - In the event of an accreditation application (initial or renewal)

Following the discussion on the compliance of the institution or study programme with each of the accreditation criteria, the President puts the accreditation decision to the vote.

The accreditation decision is always reasoned and can differ from the proposal put forward by the panel of experts. This decision may take the following forms:

unconditional five-year accreditation;
accreditation subject to two conditions:

- application of the recommendations identified in the evaluation report;
- a follow-up visit after two years of operation in order to verify implementation of the recommendations. Following this visit, the Accreditation Commission will make a reasoned decision on the possible extension of the accreditation for a further three years.

Refusal to grant accreditation.

The vote takes place by a show of hands, unless a member of the Commission requests a vote by secret ballot.

The Commission deliberates by a majority of the members present. If a vote is equally divided, the deciding vote goes to the President.

In the final version of the accreditation decision, the assessment used in the working draft will not be kept. Only the written reasoning is kept.

The evaluation report and the final accreditation decision are published on the Hcéres website.

La décision finale d'accréditation peut être assortie de recommandations de la commission d'accréditation pour l'établissement.

Le rapport d'évaluation et la décision finale d'accréditation sont publiés sur le site internet du Hcéres.

5.2 - In the event of a request for suspension or revocation of the accreditation

Where appropriate, the President calls for a vote on the decision to suspend the procedure or to revoke the accreditation.

This decision is always reasoned and may take the following forms:

- suspension of the accreditation process: the process will only be able to resume its course once the conditions set by the Commission have been fulfilled.
- permanent revocation of the accreditation.

The vote takes place by a show of hands, unless a member of the Commission requests a vote by secret ballot.

The Commission deliberates by a majority of the members present. If a vote is equally divided, the deciding vote goes to the President.

The institution concerned is notified of the duly reasoned decision made by the Accreditation Commission.

Exchanges of correspondence relating to the disputed situation and to the final revocation decision are published on the Hcéres website.

6 – APPEAL

In the event of a dispute, an appeal procedure is scheduled in front of Hcéres Appeals Board. The appeal is sent to the President of Hcéres, by registered letter, within two months of notification of the decision.

7 – REVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

The annual report on accreditations delivered by Hcéres is presented to the Board and included in the Hcéres annual activity report.