



Self-evaluation report 2021

June 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

The external evaluation of the French High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres) takes place in a fast-changing national higher education and research context. The Research Programming Law of 24 December 2020 affords Hcéres the status of an independent public authority (autorité publique indépendante – API), confirms its evaluation missions, and extends its scope to include major research infrastructures, including a new national coordination role in this field.

The High Council's governance was also renewed in 2020, with the appointment of a new Board and President, Thierry Coulhon.

In this context, the self-evaluation process is a major event for Hcéres, and takes place at a turning point in its development. The implementation of the new legislative provisions will coincide with the changes made by the President and his new management team. The results of the internal and external evaluation will therefore lay the foundations for initiatives to support these transformations.

Self-evaluation is a unifying exercise which promotes the sharing of achievements and raises awareness of improvements to be made. It is essential to the European and international recognition of Hcéres, which has traditionally been asked by foreign institutions to share its expertise, conduct evaluations and participate in international projects on a regular basis. The European and international institutions with which we collaborate, and which trust us, attach great importance to this recognition.

Hcéres is fully aware of these issues, and in this self-evaluation report, it has sought to present the context of its activities, operations and internal and external quality systems, and to analyse the extent of the integration of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and the recommendations made in 2016, while demonstrating the changes it has made, and characterising the challenges to be met and the development priorities to be considered.

2. DRAFTING OF THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (SER)

The belated appointment of the new Hcéres governance delayed the start of the self-evaluation activities somewhat and caused scheduling constraints. The methodology adopted was discussed by the Executive Committee as soon as Thierry Coulhon took office as President. Hcéres' self-evaluation process was devised as an inclusive cross-cutting project, with the head of the Quality Delegation in charge of its operational management. It was conducted in the following manner:

	When	Stage
1	January 2021	Each evaluation department first described its different quality assurance activities corresponding to the scope of the ESG.
2	January – February 2021	Guided by the forms specially drawn up by the Quality Delegation, the departments self-evaluated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - their quality standards with respect to Part 1 of the ESG, - their methodology/methodologies with regard to Part 2 of the ESG, Each department organised its activities internally, involving its administrative and scientific staff on a voluntary basis.
3	January – February 2021	The head of the Quality delegation coordinated each department's activities and wrote the introductory parts of the self-evaluation report as well as the Hcéres self-evaluation in relation to Part 3 of the ESG.
4	March 2021	A cross-disciplinary working group was established, consisting of five staff members who had not participated directly in the prior self-evaluation activities carried out within the departments. This group was tasked with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reading and proposing corrections and improvements to the introductory part of the draft Self Evaluation Report; - reading and analysing the departments' self-evaluation forms (concerning methodology and standards), and checking that these documents provide a comprehensive response to the ESG; - meeting with each department to ask questions, improve their understanding of the information provided, and share their observations; - in light of the discussions, complete the departmental analysis grids which will be included in the self-evaluation report.
5	1 st April 2021	The Quality Delegation summarised the different feedback received, finalised the draft self-evaluation report, and submitted it to the members of the Executive Committee for review.
6	15 April 2021	The comments, corrections and proposals of the members of the Steering Committee were incorporated into the draft report.
7	beginning of may	The revised version was made available to the members of the Board who had an opportunity to propose improvements to the document.
8	24 May 2021	The report was transmitted to ENQA.
9	3 June 2021	ENQA conducted a pre-screening of the report and requested some clarifications and additions
10	17 June 2021	The revised report was published on the Hcéres website and sent to ENQA as part of the external evaluation of Hcéres.

3. HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY IN FRANCE

3.1. The French higher education and research system and its development

There are more than 3,600 public and private higher education institutions in France: 72 universities, 25 Communities of Universities and Establishments (ComUE) or other types of groupings, 227 engineering schools, 220 business and management schools, 45 public schools of art, 22 schools of architecture, and 3,000 private specialised higher education institutions and institutes. Certain secondary schools (lycées) run "classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles" (CPGE – advanced courses preparing students for the competitive entrance examinations for highly selective "grandes écoles") and the "Sections de techniciens supérieurs" (STS – Advanced technical studies units), or prepare students for the "Brevet de technicien supérieur" (BTS – Advanced Vocational Training Certificate).

Public research is carried out in universities, schools and research bodies, which may be general or specialised, and be granted different statuses: foundations and special institutes (Pasteur, Curie), public science and technology institutions (EPSTs) (e.g. CNRS,¹ INSERM,² INRA³), French public industrial and commercial institutions (EPIC) (e.g. CEA,⁴ CNES⁵). Public research is carried out in research units that frequently involve one or more universities, schools and research bodies.

The last thirty years have seen profound changes in the Higher Education and Research system, and the reforms have accelerated since 2006. Three major trends are emerging: greater institutional autonomy, intensified evaluation and contractualisation with the State, and greater cooperation between participants in the higher education and research system in order to curb their fragmentation and raise their international profile.

In 2013, the French Law on Higher Education and Research (or the "Fioraso" Law, named after the erstwhile Minister for Higher Education and Research), established a more precise framework for the territorial coordination of higher education institutions, by requiring each higher education institution (university, school, institute, etc.) to participate in a ComUE, to join forces with another institution, or merge with at least one other institution. The objective was to promote the coordination of programme offerings and research strategies, improve student living conditions, and pool resources in order to raise the national and international profile of institutions. A multi-annual contract, covering a five-year period, is now concluded between the State and groups of institutions.

Several reforms of the study and training sector were conducted between 2014 and 2017, including the accreditation of study programmes, which had implications for their evaluation methods.

The "Student Plan" (Plan étudiants), a national plan to transform undergraduate education and support success for all students, was announced in 2017. This plan required the mobilisation of additional resources, with a special focus on student life (housing, health, culture, voluntary sector, etc.). This was followed by the promulgation of the Law on Student Guidance and Success (Loi ORE) in 2018, which created the "Parcoursup" platform for pre-enrolment in the first year of higher education. Another law – the fruit of interministerial efforts – was passed in 2018: the "Law on the freedom to choose one's professional future",⁶ which transformed both apprenticeship-based and professional training.

In 2018, a government order⁷ proposed to relax the legal framework for groupings established by the Law on Higher Education and Research, by authorising higher education institutions to experiment with new, more flexible forms of rapprochement.

¹ Centre national de la recherche scientifique (French National Centre for Scientific Research).

² Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale (French National Institute of Health and Medical Research).

³ Institut national de la recherche agronomique (French National Institute for Agricultural Research).

⁴ Commissariat à l'énergie atomique et aux énergies alternatives (French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission).

⁵ Centre national d'études spatiales (French National Centre for Space Studies).

⁶ Law 2018-771 <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000037367660/>

⁷ Order n° 2018-1131 of 12 December 2018 relating to experimentation with new forms of rapprochement, groupings or mergers of higher education and research institutions.

3.2. The range of academic programmes proposed by French higher education institutions

At the start of the 2019 academic year, 2.725 million students were enrolled in the French higher education system, 10.7% of them from abroad. This covers all post-secondary study programmes, which are taught mainly by:

- universities, including University Institutes of Technology (IUTs),
- Grandes Écoles (including engineering schools, business schools, Écoles Normales Supérieures, veterinary schools, military schools and initial officer training schools),
- specialised institutes and schools (including schools of art and architecture, paramedical training schools, etc.).

These institutions are supervised mainly by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and Innovation, and the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports, although some institutions are under the authority of "technical" ministries such as the Ministries for the Armed Forces, Agriculture, Industry, Culture and Health.

French higher education is mainly public, with the private sector accounting for only one in five enrolments.⁸

The holders of a qualification awarded at the end of secondary education have a legal right to access certain post-secondary study programmes at universities, which have been required to follow a pre-enrolment procedure since 2018. Access to other programmes is selective (subject to passing an examination, a competitive selection process, or recruitment based on the student's application file), particularly for the Grandes Écoles, classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles, Sections de techniciens supérieurs (STS) and the IUTs.

In the 2019 session, 668,300 candidates obtained the baccalaureate (*baccalauréat*) diploma, which meant that 80.07% of the generation were baccalaureate holders. 522,700 of these students were enrolled in higher education programmes at the start of the 2019 academic year. They were mainly holders of a general baccalaureate:⁹ 65% in 2019, compared to 21% and 14% in the technological and vocational streams, respectively.

In 2020, 658,000 students in the final year of secondary school in France participated in the national pre-enrolment and allocation procedure on "Parcoursup" (a digital platform hosting centralised guidance and admission procedures for higher education) with a view to obtaining a place on a higher education programme.

Since 2002,¹⁰ France has applied the Bologna Process at the national level by dividing its range of study programmes into three cycles: "Bachelor-Master-Doctorate" (BMD). The curricula are divided into semesters. Each academic semester is worth 30 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits, and 60 ECTS credits are therefore available for each academic year. Consequently, a three-year bachelor's degree corresponds to 180 ECTS credits, a two-year master's degree to 120 ECTS credits and a three-year doctorate to 180 ECTS credits. ECTS credits are also divided into competencies, which are listed in the diploma supplement.

The State is responsible for awarding national degrees and diplomas. A degree is said to be "national" when it is accredited, i.e. recognised by the State. This recognition concerns the following degrees and diplomas:

- "Brevet de technicien supérieur" (BTS – Advanced Vocational Training Certificates), "Diplômes universitaires de technologie" (University Technological Diplomas), bachelor's and vocational bachelor's degrees, masters, doctorates, and health diplomas, issued by French universities;
- Master's-degree-level engineering degrees awarded by the Commission des titres d'ingénieurs (CTI).

Private schools recognised by the State can deliver "certified" degrees or diplomas. The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation's endorsement gives a degree its national value, and is granted to study programmes from the three-year bachelor's degree level to the five-year master's degree level for

⁸ Source: "L'état de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche en France" (The State of Higher Education and Research in France), June 2020, Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research – data for 2018-2019.

⁹ Baccalauréat, a diploma awarded at the end of the last year of secondary school and considered as the first level of higher education.

¹⁰ Decree n° 2002-482 of 8 April 2002 "on the application of the construction of the European Higher Education Area to the French higher education system"; decrees and orders of April 2002, relating to university degrees and national degrees and diplomas.

a maximum period of six years (renewable). This is the case for business and management school degrees that have been approved by the Evaluation Committee for Qualifications issued by Business Schools (CEFDG), as well as design and journalism degrees.

Certain professional training programmes can apply for registration on the French National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP). State certification attests to a level of studies that corresponds to the registered qualification.

When a degree or diploma is not recognised by the State, it bears the name of the institution that awards it. This qualification may have value on the job market, but it does not provide equivalence for further study.

There is no automatic equivalence between foreign diplomas and French degrees. Each institution determines its own admission criteria, according to the student's previous experience, the requirements of the study programme in question and European principles. With this in mind, the French ENIC-NARIC centre¹¹ – "France Education International"¹² – has adopted a comparative approach to the processing of applications for recognition submitted by holders of foreign diplomas. These qualifications are evaluated in relation to the French system, and their holders receive a certificate of comparability. This is not a certificate of equivalence, but it is sometimes requested by higher education institutions, which then decide on a case-by-case basis.

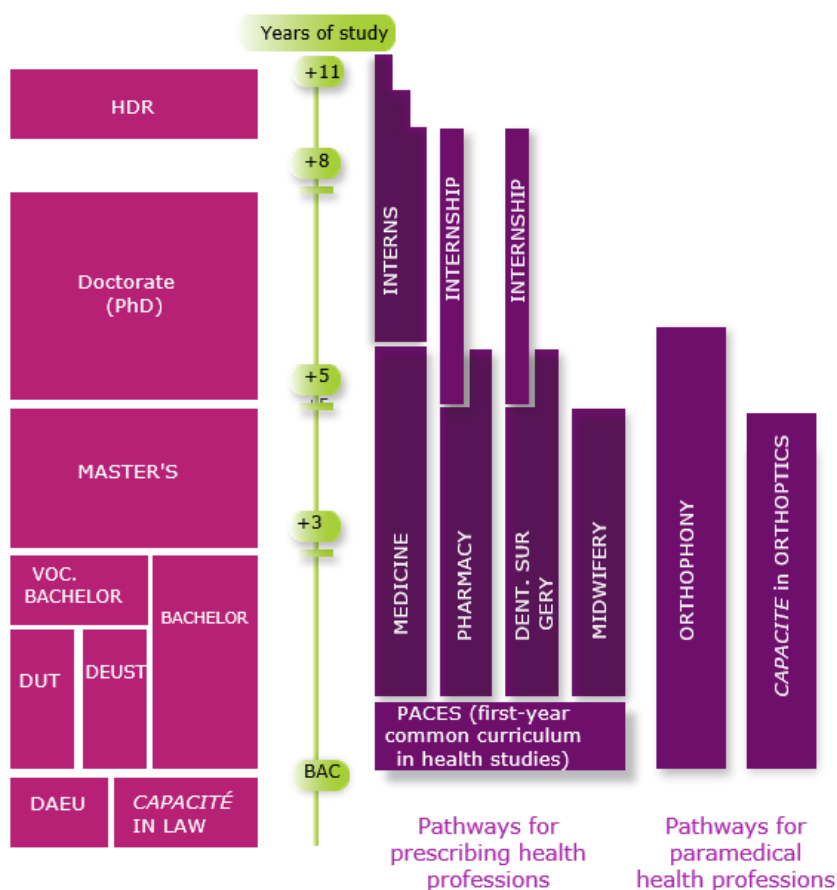


Figure 1: Diagram of the structure of the range of programmes proposed by French higher education institutions¹³

¹¹ ENIC: European Network of Information Centres – NARIC: National Academic Recognition Information Centres. Its activities contribute to the promotion of international mobility.

¹² Formerly known as the "CIEP" – Centre international d'études pédagogiques (International Centre for Academic Studies) – prior to July 2019.

¹³ Source: Université de Lille (2019).

3.3. Quality assurance in French higher education

In France, five institutions with distinct fields and scopes of action are responsible for the external quality assurance of higher education institutions and study programmes. The multi-annual Research Programming Law (LPR), promulgated in December 2020, empowers Hcéres to coordinate the activities of these national evaluation bodies.

1. The French High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres)

Hcéres is responsible for evaluating all higher education and research entities, and also for approving the evaluation procedures implemented by other bodies.

The evaluations concern:

- study programmes (bachelor's degrees, vocational bachelor's degrees, bachelor's-degree-level qualifications, master's degrees, master's-degree-level qualifications), and doctoral schools and doctoral colleges (or equivalent structures);
- research units;
- higher education institutions: universities, engineering schools, schools of art, schools of architecture, private public-interest higher education establishments (EESPIG);
- research bodies;
- their territorial clusters.

The Hcéres evaluation is non-prescriptive and does not lead to an official decision. It is designed to help the evaluated institutions conduct a substantiated self-analysis, define improvement measures, and feed decision-making by the institution and by the State (contractualisation).

In the specific context of programme evaluation, the evaluation reports are accompanied by opinions on the accreditation project and on the proposed programmes, which are transmitted to the supervising ministry for the accreditation instruments.

Hcéres is a full member of ENQA and has been registered on EQAR since its creation.

2. Commission des titres d'ingénieur (CTI)

The CTI (French engineering accreditation body) is also a full member of ENQA. It is responsible for ensuring the periodic evaluation of all engineering training programmes proposed by French institutions in France with a view to their accreditation to award an engineering degree. Its decision is final concerning the accreditation of private institutions and bodies run by chambers of commerce and industry. For public institutions, it issues opinions to the competent ministries.

When their scopes of operation are likely to overlap, Hcéres and the CTI cooperate on institutional evaluations of engineering schools. This activity was formalised by the signing of a framework agreement in 2012 (renewed in 2016), which sets out to simplify and harmonise procedures (timetable, documentation requested from evaluated entities) and exchanges of best practice.

3. The Evaluation Committee for Qualifications issued by Business Schools (CEFDG)

The CEFDG's mission is to organise the quality control procedures for higher education programmes in business and management. It also examines the development of advanced study programmes in management, in line with the global scheme for existing higher education programmes. Its opinions give rise to decisions by the State, accompanied by recommendations intended to encourage the school to adopt an improvement-oriented approach. It may also be asked to state its position on the withdrawal of an endorsement or of master's-degree-level status.

4. The National Advisory Committee of University Technology Institutes (CCN-IUT)

A special system applies to University Technology Institutes (IUTs), run by the CCN-IUT, whose secretariat is supervised by the Ministry of Higher Education. The CCN-IUT is consulted on matters of general interest relating to IUTs and their diplomas. It submits opinions on teaching methods, student recruitment conditions, and changes to the map of programmes and subspecialisms.

5. The Research University Engineering Training Network (Figure)

The Réseau Formation en Ingénierie d'Universités de Recherche (Figure)¹⁴ – launched in 2011 and run as an association since March 2013 under the Law of 1st July 1901 – is a network of universities proposing engineering training programmes based on new models, in addition to the existing degrees: the Master's Degree in Engineering (Cursus Master en Ingénierie – CMI), and the Bachelor's Degree in Engineering (Cursus Bachelor en Ingénierie – CBI), which is a more recent addition offered by certain institutions. This network has developed and implemented a dedicated quality assurance framework, including an evaluation standard approved by member institutions, which was first introduced in 2016/2017. This framework was evaluated by Hcéres in late 2019 and validated in January 2020. Figure has been an associate member of the ENAEE¹⁵ since 2014.

4. HISTORY, MISSIONS AND ORGANISATION OF HCÉRES

The French High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres) was created in July 2013 and established by decrees in November 2015. It replaced AERES.

4.1. An evolving national evaluation system

AERES – the French Agency for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education – was created in 2006 by the Research Programming Law of April 2006. It brought together three organisations with evaluation prerogatives:

- the National Evaluation Committee (CNE), an independent administrative authority responsible for evaluating higher education and research institutions;
- the Scientific, Technical and Pedagogical Mission (MSTP), attached to the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, in charge of evaluating research laboratories, study programmes, degrees, and doctoral schools;
- the National Committee for Evaluation of Research (CNER), tasked with evaluating research institutions.

The primary mission of AERES – an independent administrative authority – was to evaluate higher education and research institutions, research bodies, research units and study programmes. From the outset, these evaluation missions were defined upstream of the contractualisation process with the State, for which they were a prerequisite. AERES was also asked to participate in cooperation and evaluation missions abroad.

In the autumn of 2012, the National Forum on Higher Education and Research was launched in preparation for a new government bill on higher education and research. The Higher Education and Research Law 2013-660 of 22 July 2013, also known as the "Fioraso Law", replaced AERES with Hcéres. Hcéres also benefited from independent administrative authority status and inherited all of AERES' rights and obligations. In addition, this law introduced the opportunity for evaluated entities to choose an evaluation body other than Hcéres, provided that the High Council validated the evaluation procedures beforehand. Hcéres also retained certain prerogatives in the international field and was tasked with conducting ex post evaluations of programmes in the Plan d'investissements d'avenir (Investments for the Future Programme to finance innovative nationwide investments, particularly in relation to research). Hcéres' structure was finalised in late October 2015, after the publication of a Council of State decree specifying its organisational structure and operating procedures, followed by two other decrees on the appointment of its board and its president.

In 2020, a new law – the Multi-Annual Research Programming Law, also known as the "LPR" (Loi de programmation pluriannuelle de la recherche) or the "Research Law" – was adopted by the French Parliament on 20 November 2020 and promulgated on 24 December 2020. It set three priority objectives: "to improve the funding and evaluation of public research, increase the attractiveness of careers in research and foster an open relationship between science and society as a whole". This law confirmed Hcéres' evaluation missions and established its legal personality. In addition, it set Hcéres the new task of "coordinating the actions of national evaluation bodies in the fields of research and higher education,

¹⁴ <https://reseau-figure.fr/>

¹⁵ The European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAEE).

with the exception of bodies responsible for evaluating personnel, in accordance with the specific characteristics of the missions carried out by these national bodies".

4.2. Missions

The Multi-Annual Research Programming Law has therefore revised and extended Hcéres' missions, which are presented below as they are worded in the legislation:

- The evaluation of higher education institutions and their groupings, research bodies, scientific cooperation foundations and the French National Research Agency (ANR). When these evaluations are conducted by other bodies, Hcéres is responsible for their quality assurance;
- The evaluation of research structures and units at the request of their parent institution, in the absence of the validation of their evaluation procedures, or in the absence of a decision by the parent institution of these structures and units to appoint another body.
When the institution decides to appoint another body, the High Council validates the evaluation procedures of this body beforehand.
This activity falls outside the scope of the ESG and is not expanded upon in this report.

- The evaluation of the study programmes, degrees and diplomas of higher education institutions or, where necessary, the validation of evaluation procedures implemented by other bodies. The High Council ensures that the range of programmes offered by the institution is consistent with student guidance and success;

Evaluation is a prerequisite for the accreditation and for its renewal.

- Hcéres ensures that the evaluations of higher education and research staff take into account all of the missions assigned to them by law and their specific statuses.;
The evaluation of major national research infrastructures (Grandes infrastructures de recherche – GIR), and of private-sector structures receiving public funds destined for research or higher education;
- The evaluation of activities relating to the dissemination of scientific, technical and industrial culture within institutions, research structures, units and programmes, and activities involving the provision of scientific expertise to public authorities and Parliament;
- The promotion of research integrity and its inclusion in the evaluations that Hcéres conducts or whose procedures it validates;
- The evaluation of the implementation of measures to promote gender equality in institutions contributing to the public service of higher education and the public service of research;
- The High Council meets the evaluation needs expressed the Ministers for Higher Education, Research and innovation;
- At the request of the competent authorities, it may also evaluate the research activities of other institutions whose statutes provide for a research mission;
- It also coordinates the actions of national evaluation bodies in the fields of research and higher education, with the exception of bodies responsible for evaluating personnel, in accordance with the specific characteristics of the missions carried out by these national bodies. This is a new mission whose terms will be set out in a future decree.

4.3. Status and organisational structure

1. Status of Hcéres

Hcéres has been granted independent administrative authority (autorité administrative indépendante – AAI) status. Independent Administrative Authorities are institutions created by law, enjoying more autonomy than traditional administrative organisations, and assigned a specific regulatory mission in a particular field. They have a general regulatory framework defined by Organic Law 2017-54 of 20 January 2017 on independent administrative authorities and independent public authorities, and the regulation of each authority is completed by a specific law.

The Research Programming Law (LPR) provides for a change in Hcéres' status: currently an independent administrative authority, it will become an Independent public authority (Autorité publique indépendante – API) with a legal personality on 1st January 2022. This change will increase the institution's autonomy: the

Board will have the power to adopt the budget and an accounting agency will be assigned to Hcéres; it will become an employer, and will be able to institute legal proceedings. In terms of functions, this transformation will be similar to that undertaken by universities when they acquired "extended responsibilities and powers" (*responsabilités et compétences élargies* – RCE) after the 2007 Law on "Freedoms and Responsibilities of Universities". This transformation requires overall reflection on how different functions are performed at Hcéres, at present and in the future, in conjunction with stakeholders.

The Organic Law on AAls/APIs stipulates that, in the exercise of their powers, their members shall not receive or seek instructions from any authority. This means that these institutions fall outside the hierarchical authority that is normally exercised by government ministries within public bodies.

AAls, like APIs, send an annual activity report to the Government and Parliament, which accounts for their missions and the resources used.

2. Hcéres' governance structure: a Board and a President

Independent Administrative Authorities and Independent Public Authorities are characterised by their collegial operating procedures. The governance of Hcéres was delegated (by Decree 2014-1365 of 14 November 2014) to a Board of 30 members, including its President, with gender parity, and appointed for a renewable four-year term by the Minister for Higher Education and Research. The majority of members of the Board are proposed by the stakeholders in the evaluation (Conference of University Presidents (CPU), French Universities Board (CNU), research bodies). The Board also includes two students, two national elected representatives (one Member of Parliament and one Senator), and three representatives of European quality assurance agencies. The President of Hcéres is appointed by decree of the President of the Republic, after a public call for applications and the examination of these applications by a commission whose members are appointed by the French Prime Minister after nomination by the Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation. The new governing body was appointed on 1st November 2020, one year after the end of the term of the previous governing body (29 October 2019). The General Secretary had taken over these duties on an interim basis, and the absence of a Board meant that only day-to-day operations could be carried out. No decisions were made concerning methodologies, standards or the functioning of Hcéres.

The Multi-Annual Research Programming Law limits the composition of the Hcéres Board to 24 members, including the President. As this law was adopted after the renewal of the Board, the new provisions concerning the governance of Hcéres will not be applied until its renewal in the autumn of 2024.

The powers of the Board and the President are defined by the law and Decree n° 2014-1365.

The legislation¹⁶ specifies the **Board's** role:

- Guaranteeing the quality of Hcéres' activities by defining "measures to guarantee the quality, transparency and publication of the evaluation procedures";
- Defining the annual evaluation programme;
- Ensuring that the evaluations conducted by the High Council, or by bodies using procedures that it has approved, take account of the national and territorial aspects of higher education and research, particularly within the framework of territorial coordination;
- Making sure that the evaluations take account of the links between training and research;
- Defining the framework, objectives, criteria and manner in which the evaluation procedures are performed;
- Ensuring that the selected criteria and evaluation procedures used or validated by the High Council take account of the diverse types and missions of evaluated organisations and study programmes and the diversity of disciplines;
- Defining the general framework in which evaluations, studies or analyses are conducted at the request of the Ministers for Higher Education and Research;
- Ensuring that the High Council engages in regular communication with institutional stakeholders and the bodies involved in various evaluations, with a view to the continuous improvement of evaluation criteria and procedures;
- The Board deliberates upon:
 - an evaluation charter defining the measures required to ensure the quality and transparency of evaluation procedures,

¹⁶ The French Research Code and Decree 2014-1365 of 14 November 2014.

- the standards for evaluations conducted by the High Council,
- the validation of all evaluation procedures,
- the terms of the appointment of experts,
- a multi-year programme of evaluations in line with the time frames of the multi-annual institutional contracts,
- the High Council's European and international cooperation policy,
- the report submitted to the government,
- the general terms for the recruitment, employment and remuneration of the High Council's contract staff,
- the conditions for the reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses, up to the amounts actually incurred, for all persons acting on behalf of the High Council,
- and at the President's proposal, the Board deliberates upon: the High Council's in-house rules; the internal organisation into departments; the appointment of department heads; the creation of a Local Technical Committee; the composition of the Observatory's Scientific Steering Committee."

The **President's powers** are laid down in the same decree on the organisation of Hcéres: "The President of the Board leads the French High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education. He or she ensures that evaluations are impartial, reliable and transparent. He or she signs decisions concerning the validation of evaluation procedures and attests to their compliance with the ethical and professional standards, and with the validation rules adopted by the Board. He or she appoints experts. He or she countersigns evaluation reports drawn up by panels of experts and signed by their Chairs. The President has authority over the High Council's staff. He or she is the authorising officer for revenue and expenditure. The President appoints the Secretary General, who is responsible for the administrative organisation and operation of the High Council for a renewable term of four years. He or she also appoints the department heads. The President may delegate his or her power of signature to the Secretary General, the heads and managers of departments for business pertaining to their respective roles, and to agents under his or her authority for any documents relating to the High Council's operations and to their duties."

3. Internal organisation

The Board and its President are responsible for the organisation of Hcéres. The Secretary General is in charge of the functioning and administrative organisation.

Hcéres has 117 administrative staff¹⁷. To carry out all of its missions, it recruits scientific advisors on a part-time basis, who are researchers or professors in French higher education and research institutions. There were 99 such Scientific Advisors in 2020/2021.

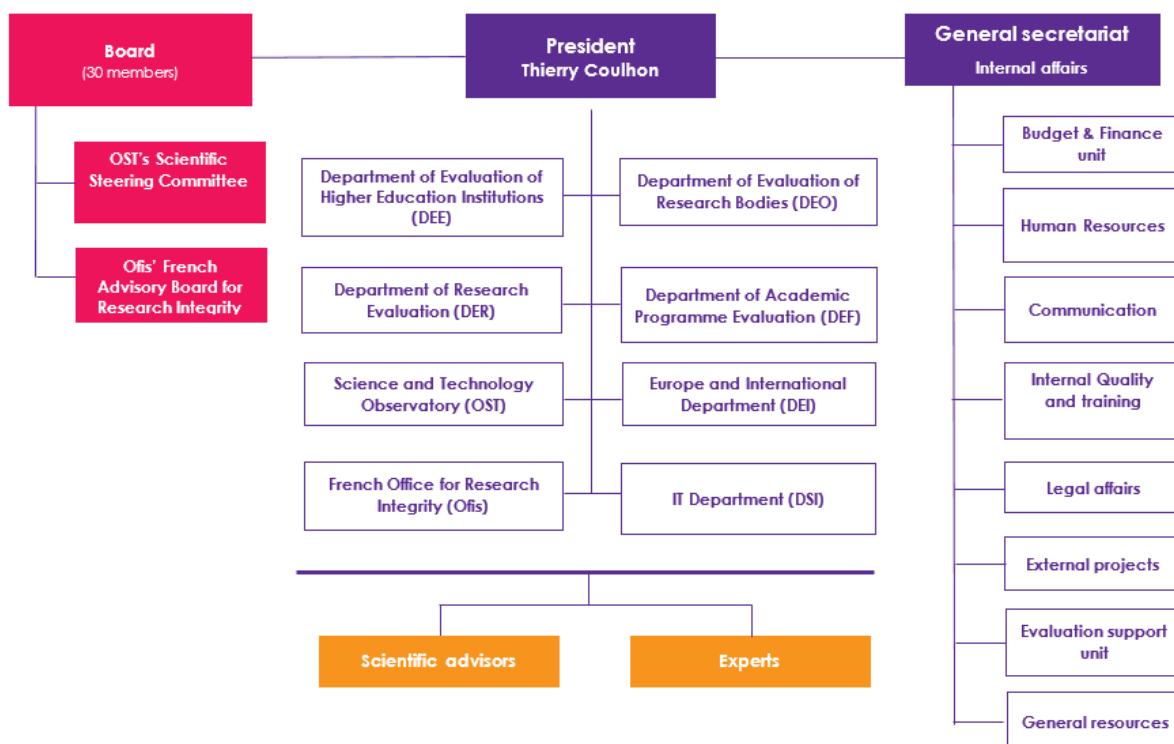
The Hcéres is organised into departments:

- **5 evaluation departments**, reorganised since 1st March 2021, each led by a director with the support of a department head. Directors are appointed by the President after approval by the Board, for a renewable term of four years. The administrative team is composed of project managers and administrative assistants. Each department relies on the expertise of Scientific Advisors to organise the evaluations. They continue to work in their home institutions and are seconded on a part-time basis. The five evaluation departments are:
 - The **Department of Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions (DEE)**, responsible for the evaluation of institutions, universities and Grandes Écoles,
 - The **Department of Academic Programme Evaluation (DEF)**, in charge of evaluating the programme offerings and training policies of higher education institutions, in addition to study programmes (bachelor's, master's and equivalent degrees), doctoral schools and doctoral colleges,
 - The **Department of Research Evaluation (DER)**, responsible for the evaluation of research unit and research policies,
 - The **Department of Evaluation of Research Bodies (DEO)**, tasked with the evaluation of national research bodies, research infrastructures and their relations with universities and schools,
 - The **Europe and International Department (DEI)** responsible for developing Hcéres' international evaluation and cooperation activities.

¹⁷ Number recorded on 31/12/2019.

- **The Science and Technology Observatory (OST)**, incorporated into¹⁸ Hcéres in 2015 and dedicated to the performance of thematic and bibliometric studies and analyses. It is headed by a director and guided by a Scientific Steering Committee (COS), whose composition is validated by the Hcéres Board. The director is appointed by the President of Hcéres after nomination by the COS. Its staff is composed of researchers, analysts, project assistants, statisticians and computer scientists. The OST's activities include the production of regular indicators and analyses on scientific and technological research, analyses in support of Hcéres' evaluations, the management of specific projects, and responses to external orders. The majority of this department's activities, which are outside the scope of the ESG, are not analysed in this self-evaluation report;
- **The French Office for Research Integrity (Ofis)**, created in March 2017, led by a director appointed by the President and supported by the French Advisory Board for Research Integrity (Cofis), which guides and supervises the Ofis' activities. Ofis is a platform with three missions: reflection, monitoring the implementation of the commitments in the Research Integrity Charter, and coordination by promoting the sharing and pooling of practices in this field.
- **The IT Department (DSI)**, which organises and develops the Hcéres information system to support its evaluation and study activities.
- **The General Secretariat** covers all support activities, i.e. human resources, financial management, the evaluation support unit (responsible for booking transport and accommodation for Hcéres' teams, including experts), communication, legal affairs, external projects and the Quality and Training Delegation.

Hcéres also has its own social dialogue and consultation body – the Technical Committee – composed of eight staff representatives (four permanent and four alternate members), elected by list (last elections held in December 2018).



¹⁸ Decree of 14 November 2014.

5. HCÉRES' QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

As laid down by the law, evaluation is a prerequisite for the contractualisation of institutions with the State. In this context, the evaluation is mandatory and no financial contribution is requested from the institutions within the national scope. The aim of this contract is to promote a strategic dialogue between the State and higher education institutions, while taking account of their autonomous management status. The need for a coherent medium- and long-term strategic vision at the territorial, national and European levels has led to a change in the scope of the contracts and their positioning at the strategic "site" level. The "site" is taken to be the focus of institutional and scientific cooperation, giving rise to an integrated and decompartmentalised overview of the dynamics at work in a given territory. The site contract now has two distinct components: one common to all institutions on the site, describing the shared training, research and transfer trajectory, and a second that is specific to each institution, describing each institution's contribution to the site policy. The contracts are multi-annual, covering a five-year period. The evaluations carried out by Hcéres therefore take place every five years and are divided into five geographical areas or groups¹⁹ (A, B, C, D, E). They serve as the basis for negotiating the multi-annual contracts.

Over the course of a five-year cycle, Hcéres evaluates approximately:

- 310 higher education institutions (universities, schools), including groupings thereof;
- 5,300 programmes (bachelor's degrees, vocational bachelor's degrees, master's degrees), including doctoral schools and doctoral colleges;
- 2,500 research units.

5.1. Evaluation of institutions (universities and schools) and sites (territorial clusters)

The evaluated institutions (universities, schools, and territorial clusters) are supervised mainly by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and Innovation, and the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports, although some institutions are under the authority of "technical" ministries such as the Ministries for the Armed Forces, Agriculture, Industry, Culture and Health. The institutional evaluation conducted by Hcéres covers the last five years. The evaluation reports are used, generally between six months and a year after their publication, among other elements, by the supervisory ministries to take decisions (allocation of resources, accreditation, etc.) and to define the objectives of the multi-annual contract for the coming period (five years).

Benefiting from a process of simplification and clarification that applies from the current evaluation group (Group B) onwards, the institutional evaluation standard is based on a model of institutional management revolving around the following key dimensions: operational and strategic management, research, training, and student success.

Clusters of institutions are above all strategic coordination bodies at the territorial level. With respect to study programmes, their role is to ensure that the programme offerings proposed by the site's member institutions are properly structured. In this regard, the evaluation of these structures does not fall within the scope of the ESG. Since 2018,²⁰ it has been possible to create groupings of institutions in forms other than those initially provided for by the Fioraso Law, and to experiment with methods defined by the members. An integrated site evaluation process (the terms "site", "territorial cluster" and "grouping" are used here interchangeably) was designed with input from all Hcéres evaluation departments and the OST.

The so-called "top-down" integrated evaluation process was preferred as of Group D. The evaluation of territorial coordination was organised before that of institutions, research and training programmes. The territorial coordination evaluation report could thus be part of the file submitted to the experts evaluating the various levels of organisation, so that the latter could analyse the level of ownership of the territorial coordination strategy by the programme sponsors, research unit managers and heads of institutions.

This integrated evaluation was followed by a consolidation phase through the elaboration of different summaries and a final summative analysis of integrated evaluation.

¹⁹ <https://www.hceres.fr/en/map-evaluation-campaigns/what-evaluated-and-when>

²⁰ Order n° 2018-113 of 12 December relating to experimentation with new forms of rapprochement, groupings or mergers of higher education and research institutions.

The methodology adopted to produce this summative analysis of all evaluations conducted on a site (evaluation of the territorial cluster itself, its member institutions, study programmes, doctoral schools and research units) is based on the summaries produced by the different departments, which bring together all the evaluation reports for a given site (institutional summary, training and doctoral school summary, research summary), and the cross-referencing of all these summaries with the evaluation report for the grouping. In this way, the integrated evaluation highlights the strengths and weaknesses of a site and provides an overview of its key development issues. Only sufficiently stable sites are adapted to the production of these summative analyses. Although this process has improved communication between Hcéres' departments, interactions have often been limited to information sharing, but not to a truly integrated evaluation process.

The results have been mixed, in particular given the difficulties involved in combining of all the different site summaries. Interesting analyses concerning the future of sites have emerged from the cross-referencing of the institutional, programme and research evaluations, but the extension of the time frame for this review has resulted in the comparison of reports produced up to a year and a half apart, which has impaired the comparison exercise. The highly unstable situations of sites over the past period has not always made this integrated site summary possible or relevant. The difficulties encountered in the implementation of site policies at the national level, and the strategic shift of attention towards the institution, which is now the priority focus for the evaluation, are prompting Hcéres to rethink its integrated evaluation process for institutions scheduled from Group C (2022-2023) onwards.

5.2. Evaluation of programmes and doctoral schools

This field of activity concerns the evaluation of bachelor's, vocational bachelor's and master's degree programmes, which come under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education, or of equivalent degree levels, which are also overseen by other supervisory ministries, as well as the evaluation of doctoral schools and doctoral colleges. It takes place before the national State accreditation process, and is carried out every five years. The external evaluation of study programmes concerns only those that have been in existence for at least two years.

The ESR Law replaced the degree accreditation procedure with the institutional accreditation procedure. The Order of 22 January 2014 sets out the procedures for accrediting a higher education institution to award national degrees and diplomas, and defines the requirements for the accreditation file. The range of study programmes is simplified (elimination of subspecialisms; creation of a national nomenclature of degrees and diplomas). Institutions are free to organise their study programmes by introducing training pathways which they may modify at their discretion during the course of the contract.

To guarantee the quality of national degrees and diplomas, the ministry consults a national study programme framework during the accreditation procedure. This enables a form of national regulation that is strict but respectful of institutional autonomy.

Dialogue between the State and its operators is now focused on the training strategy and the ability to implement it.

Hcéres has made substantial changes to its programme evaluation process in order to take account of the Law on Student Guidance and Success, the changes in the regulatory framework for study programmes,²¹ and greater diversity in programme offerings and organisations at the undergraduate level (first cycle of higher education) in universities.

Since the Group "B" evaluations (2020/2021), Hcéres has conducted global evaluations of universities' policies with regard to the leadership, organisation and quality of their undergraduate provision, and in light of public policies for higher education.

In practical terms, Hcéres examines institutions' policies and actions at the undergraduate level. It examines each study programme in a simplified manner, using a self-positioning process for the programmes, supported by contextualisation and associated indicators, with the aim of evaluating the implementation of the institution's strategy in each programme while verifying the consideration of the accreditation criteria.

The evaluation of graduate-level (second-cycle) programmes is based on breaking down the provision into fields of study, and consists in evaluating the field and each study programme within it. This breakdown into fields is defined by the institution, at its own discretion, on the basis of its strategic, disciplinary or thematic strengths. A field of study can be either a coherent set of study programmes, one of the institution's areas of expertise, or a reflection of the institute's strategy vis-à-vis the delivery of study

²¹ Order of 30 July 2018 amending the order of 22 January 2014 defining the national framework for study programmes leading to national bachelor's, vocational bachelor's and master's degrees; Order of 6 December 2019 on the vocational bachelor's degree reform.

programmes. From Group C onwards, the methodology adopted for the undergraduate level will be extended to the graduate level cycle as a whole by abandoning the breakdown into fields.

Doctoral schools (EDs) are internal organisations within public institutions, which are accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation to award doctorates and implement doctoral training. They establish a multidisciplinary culture for doctoral students within the framework of a coherent scientific project, and bring together research units and teams from one or more higher education institutions, including at least one public institution located on the same site or on nearby sites. Doctoral schools based on one site are generally grouped together within a doctoral college (or an equivalent structure), which is wholly or partially responsible for several missions assigned to doctoral schools; the college is therefore a key player in the implementation of doctoral studies. When institutions or groups of institutions jointly implement doctoral studies on the site, Hcéres also conducts an evaluation of doctoral colleges.

These evaluations take place prior to accreditation and provide decision makers with an opinion on accreditation. They follow the rate and breakdown of the contractualisation process.

5.3. Evaluations conducted outside the national scope

The law authorises Hcéres to conduct evaluations at the request of foreign institutions. These requests may concern an institution, study programmes (bachelor's, master's or doctorate), or research.

Mobilising its extensive network of academic, professional, student and administrative experts, the Europe and International Department (DEI) meets the needs of actors in international higher education by adapting to their local contexts and requirements.

This accreditation corresponds to the awarding of a "Hcéres label" attesting to the quality of a study programme or an institution. It does not denote equivalence with a French diploma. Recognition of the equivalence of foreign diplomas can only be issued by the Ministry.

Hcéres' Standing Committee on Accreditation is composed of at least eight members: the President of Hcéres, the Director of the DEI, the Director of the Department of Evaluation of Higher Education and Research Institutions or the Department of Academic Programme Evaluation according to the type of entity to be accredited, three members of the Hcéres Board, including one student, and one representative of a foreign agency. The standing rapporteur of the committee is the Director of the DEI. The committee meets three to four times a year, on average, usually on the same dates as the Hcéres Board, and publishes its decisions on the website.

Three kinds of decisions can be made:

1. An accreditation decision for five to six years for programmes evaluated under the European Approach – without conditions;
2. Accreditation, under two conditions:
 - consideration of the prescriptive recommendations identified in the evaluation report;
 - verification of documentation or a follow-up visit (on site or online) after two or three years of operation to check on the implementation of the prescriptive recommendations. At the end of this visit, Hcéres will decide whether to extend the accreditation for a further two to three years.
3. A decision against accreditation.

6. EVALUATION PROCESS AND METHODOLOGIES

The evaluation activities of Hcéres that fall within the scope of the ESG are:

- Evaluation of institutions (schools and universities),
- Evaluation of study programmes and doctoral schools,
- Evaluation of programmes and institutions abroad.

The evaluation of research entities and of research organisations, outside the scope of the ESG, are not analysed in this report.

6.1. Institutional evaluation process (universities and schools)

Institutional evaluation process (universities and schools)		
Associated standards²²: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External evaluation standard for universities - External evaluation standard for higher education and research institutions 		
No.	Stage of the process	Brief description
1	Preparation of the evaluation campaign	Approximately two years before the start of evaluations for a group, Hcéres draws up a list of institutions to be evaluated and establishes working parties to define and, if necessary, develop its standards and methodologies (on the basis of feedback and regulatory changes).
2	Launch of the evaluation campaign and planning of the group	<p>Approximately one year before the start of evaluations for a group, Hcéres contacts the institutions to be evaluated in order to specify the evaluation procedures.</p> <p>Meetings are organised on site to present the reference systems, the self-evaluation requirements, the methodology for the external evaluation, and to determine the timetable for the procedure. Following these meetings, the evaluation departments draw up a schedule of evaluations for the coming year and assign a portfolio to the two-person teams consisting of a permanent member of the administrative staff and a scientific advisor.</p> <p>Several training sessions are organised for the experts. Experts are trained in the methodologies in two formats: a session for the Chairs of panels, and a session for experts.</p>
3	Preparation of the evaluation and formation of panels	<p>The two-person team in charge of the evaluation forms the panels by recruiting members from Hcéres' pool of experts in accordance with the criteria that apply to institutional evaluations (including parity and the correspondence of profiles to the institution being evaluated): academic experts who hold or have held institutional governance responsibilities, an academic expert with international authority, an administrative expert in higher education and research, an expert from the socio-economic sector, and a student expert.</p> <p>Hcéres' teams identify any conflicts of interest or special-interest ties among the selected experts. The selected experts are approved by department heads and then presented to the institution, which may flag up any conflicts of interest that might not have been detected by Hcéres. At the same time, the appointed experts sign a declaration of interests (Annex F) and a declaration of commitments and confidentiality (Annex G).</p> <p>The schedule of the different working meetings is determined with the experts.</p>
4	Meeting with the institution	<p>A preliminary meeting between Hcéres and the institution being evaluated is organised to enable the institution to specify its expectations and the particular issues to be taken into consideration.</p> <p>Based on the evaluation standard, the institution is asked to present and describe a limited number of topics linked to one or more standards, which will be examined in greater depth by the panel of experts during its investigations. After this presentation of the expectations, Hcéres first analyses whether it will be feasible for its experts to address them (time constraints, relevance of these expectations to the standard, etc.), and then draws up a summary in the form of a review of the expectations, which is transmitted to the experts.</p>
5	Preparation for the visit	Shortly after the submission of the self-evaluation report, and around two months before the visit, an initial meeting with the Chair of the panel is organised by the Hcéres team in preparation for the evaluation. Work then begins on the issue paper – an internal working document used by the panel to formulate its initial evaluative judgements.

²² Documents provided as Annex A

Institutional evaluation process (Universities, schools) – continued

5	Preparation for the visit (continued)	<p>Shortly after the submission of the self-evaluation report, and around two months before the visit, an initial meeting with the Chair of the panel is organised by the Hcéres team in preparation for the evaluation. Work then begins on the issue paper – an internal working document used by the panel to formulate its initial evaluative judgements.</p> <p>This issue paper is written by the panel with reference to the Hcéres standard, and is based on the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the institution's self-evaluation file; - a review of the expectations; - a short follow-up report on the actions taken on the recommendations after two years. <p>Approximately three weeks before the visit, a preparatory meeting is organised with all members of the panel and the Hcéres two-person team. The issue paper is discussed and finalised and the visit schedule is validated. In addition, the conclusions of the evaluation of the territorial cluster to which the evaluated institution belongs are presented to the panel. A courtesy letter is sent to the institution in order to inform stakeholders of the institutional evaluation mandate and the arrangements for hearings during the visit.</p> <p>To optimise its preparations for the visit, Hcéres asks the panel's experts to draw up interview sheets for each of the scheduled appointments.</p>
6	Visit (approximately 3 days)	<p>The visit schedule, drawn up jointly by Hcéres, the Chair of the panel and the institution, includes meetings with a representative sample of all categories of stakeholders in the institution (students, professors, administrative staff), and also with external partners (academics, companies, local authorities). Meetings with the institution's governing body are held at the beginning and end of the visit.</p> <p>The panel sets out to draw up a list of the main evaluative conclusions (strengths, weaknesses, recommendations) at the end of the visit, but does not share them with the institution.</p>
7	Drafting and proofreading of the report	<p>Approximately one month after the visit, the panel sends a draft report to Hcéres, which is then proofread and commented upon by Hcéres' in-house editorial committee in order to verify its consistency and the quality of its reasoning.</p> <p>Ten weeks after the visit, Hcéres organises a post-evaluation meeting to hold a final discussion with the panel and finalise the "provisional" report, which is sent to the institution.</p>
8	Response phase and publication of the report	<p>The response phase for the evaluation report takes place in two stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The institution formulates its initial remarks, which may concern factual errors, misunderstandings, omissions, improper wording, ill-founded assertions or even statements liable to pose clear competitive or even legal risks to the institution. The panel considers and addresses such remarks at its discretion. The report amended in this manner is referred to as the "final" report; • This report is transmitted to the institution, which then sends Hcéres its letter of observations, which is appended to the report. The report is signed by the President of Hcéres and the Chair of the panel of experts, before being published on the Hcéres website. The entire report is transmitted to the institution's supervising ministry or ministries.
9	Feedback	<p>As soon as the report is published, feedback questionnaires are sent to the evaluated entities and the experts. Their responses are collated and analysed at the end of each evaluation group and are used to improve the methodology and standards.</p>

Institutional evaluation process (Universities, schools) – continued		
10	Follow-up report on the actions taken onto the recommendations	Two years after their evaluation, Hcéres asks institutions to produce a document summarising the main actions implemented in response to the recommendations set out in its evaluation report. This document will be sent to the panel of experts in charge of the next evaluation (see above).

6.2. Study programme evaluation process

As part of the State accreditation of higher education institutions to run undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate study programmes, all equivalent bachelor's degree programmes, equivalent master's degree programmes and doctoral school programmes, are listed in a 5-year order. This accreditation is based on an evaluation process conducted by Hcéres, which evaluates the results and the plan for the range of study programmes and doctoral schools. The stages of this process are the same as for the range of study programmes and doctoral schools. Any minor differences between them are revealed in the descriptions that follow.

Evaluation process for study programmes and doctoral schools		
Associated standards²³: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hcéres standard for the evaluation of a bachelor's degree programme - Hcéres standard for the evaluation of a master's degree programme - Hcéres standard for the evaluation of a doctoral school - Hcéres standard for the evaluation of a doctoral college (or equivalent structure) 		
No.	Stage of the process	Brief description
1	Preparation of the evaluation campaign	Approximately two years before the start of an evaluation group, Hcéres draws up a list of institutions to be evaluated and establishes working parties in order to define and, if necessary, develop its standards and methodologies (on the basis of feedback and regulatory changes), establish the frameworks, and prepare the documents required for the institution's self-evaluation. Hcéres then makes sure that the institutions are satisfied with its arrangements. The evaluation covers both the results of the last five years and the plan for the range of study programmes for the next five years.
2	Launch of the evaluation campaign and planning of the group	Approximately one year before the start of an evaluation group, Hcéres contacts the institutions in order to inform them about the evaluation procedures. Meetings are organised on site to present the reference systems, the self-evaluation requirements, and the methodology for the external evaluation, and to establish the timetable for the procedure. Hcéres collects the provisional lists of study programmes from the institutions. Following these meetings, the Department of Academic Programme Evaluation (DEF) draws up a schedule of evaluations for the coming year and assigns their portfolios to the two-person teams consisting of a Scientific Advisor and a permanent member of the administrative staff.
3	Preparation of the evaluation and formation of the panel of experts	The scientific advisors recruit the panel members from the Hcéres pool of experts according to the criteria required for the evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For undergraduate and graduate-level programmes, the panels are composed of a Chair, associated with three academic experts selected according to their disciplinary field, in addition to one professional and one student member; - For doctoral schools or doctoral colleges, the panels are composed of a Chair, associated with three academic experts selected according to their disciplinary field, one recent doctoral graduate, and one member of the administrative staff for doctoral colleges.

²³ Documents provided as Annex B

Evaluation process for study programmes and doctoral schools - continued

3	Preparation of the evaluation and formation of the panel of experts (continued)	<p>Experts are selected according to their scientific expertise and their knowledge of regulatory requirements. One of the academic experts may be an international expert, if necessary.</p> <p>The choice of panel members takes account of the need to combine all the expertise required to evaluate the programme offering, the doctoral school or the doctoral college.</p> <p>Hcéres' teams examine any conflicts of interest or special-interest ties among the prospective experts. The composition of the panels is approved on a collegial basis by the Scientific Advisors and the director. These choices are then submitted to the institution, which can flag up any undetected conflicts of interest. At the same time, the recruited experts sign a declaration of interest (Annex F) and the declaration of commitments and confidentiality (Annex G) on the Hcéres electronic document management system (EDM). Hcéres organises a training meeting to present its missions, the evaluation methodology and process, and the timetable.</p> <p>As the recruitment of experts is very time-consuming, regular calls for applications, as is already done for the recruitment of students and recent doctoral graduates, coordinated between departments, will be introduced. In addition, to facilitate the recruitment of experts from the socio-economic world, the Hcéres could rely on the work of the annual conference between France Compétences and the Hcéres, provided for in the law of 5 September 2018 on the freedom to choose one's professional future.</p>
4	Visit	<p>In consultation with the institution, Hcéres draws up a visit schedule lasting one to three days, depending on the number of interviews required and the level concerned. The Scientific Advisor supports the panel, and an evaluation assistant from Hcéres may also be present, depending on the duration. The panel bases its evaluation on an analysis grid developed on the basis of the self-evaluation file submitted by the institution.</p> <p>The visit includes interviews with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the management/president of the evaluated entity; - the heads of the institution's study programmes or the directors of the evaluated entities (doctoral school/college); - representatives of the partner institutions authorities; - the management staff and heads of University Research Schools²⁴ (EUR) and Graduate Schools for the doctoral colleges; <p>A representative panel of doctoral students and PhDs from doctoral colleges and schools.</p>
5	Drafting of the evaluation report	<p>The experts are responsible for writing two types of reports (consecutively or simultaneously):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An evaluation report on the results (<i>Ex Post</i>) of the range of programmes offered by the doctoral school or the doctoral college over the past period (5 years); • An evaluation report on the plan (<i>Ex Ante</i>) for accreditation by the Ministry of the next five years.

²⁴ A University Research School (école universitaire de recherche – EUR) is a university structure created under the agreement of 14 February 2017 between the State and the National Research Agency (ANR) relating to the Programme d'investissements d'avenir (PIA – Investments for the Future Programme). EURs are a combination of higher education institutions and research organisations with a strong international dimension. They forge the closest possible links with economic players.

University Research Schools were created to finance the internationally recognised Graduate School model by bringing together master's and doctoral programmes, and one or more high-level research units.

Evaluation process for study programmes and doctoral schools – continued		
5	Drafting of the evaluation report (continued)	<p>These reports are based on a model that includes an analysis, identification of strengths/weaknesses, recommendations, and focal points.</p> <p>With the exception of doctoral schools, the panel also formulates an accreditation opinion for each programme for the project report.</p> <p>The reports are approved on a collegial basis at a meeting of the panel of experts, before being proofread by Hcéres' teams. At the doctoral level, the experts produce an evaluation report on doctoral studies based on an analysis of the evaluation reports of the doctoral college and the doctoral schools on the same site.</p> <p>Additional use will be made of the evaluation reports on higher education institutions in the form of studies and thematic summaries by institution, by site, by region or at national level.</p>
6	Response phase and publication of the report	<p>The response phase for the evaluation report takes place in two stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The institution formulates its remarks on factual errors and any observations relating to problems, misunderstandings, omissions, improper wording, ill-founded assertions, or even statements that are liable to pose clear competitive or even legal risks to the institution. The panel considers and addresses such remarks at its discretion. The report amended in this manner is referred to as "final". • This final report is transmitted to the institution, which then sends Hcéres its letter of response, which is appended to the report. The report, signed by the Hcéres President and the Chair of the panel, is published on the Hcéres website. The entire report is transmitted to the institution's supervising ministry or ministries.
7	Feedback	<p>After the publication of the report, feedback questionnaires are sent to the evaluated entities and experts. Their responses are collated and analysed at the end of each evaluation group and inform improvements to the methodology and standards. This feedback is transmitted to the respondents and to the institutions via the EDM portal and the Hcéres newsletter.</p>

The process and standards for the evaluation of training programmes have undergone continuous change during the period under evaluation, both to adapt to new public policies and as part of the continuous improvement process based on feedbacks. For example, in order to better link the evaluation of the institution's policy and the evaluation of programmes, Hcéres experimented with evaluation by programme field (for undergraduate and graduate levels), but this proved to be of little relevance to the institution and was abandoned for the undergraduate level in group B (in favour of a transversal approach to the level) and will be abandoned from group C onwards for the graduate level (in favour of this same transversality)

6.3. International evaluation process

International evaluation process
<p>Associated standards²⁵:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External evaluation standard for international higher education and research institutions - Accreditation criteria for institutions abroad - External evaluation standard for international higher education and research programmes - Accreditation criteria for international study programmes - External evaluation standard for international Level 8 (PhD) higher education and research programmes. - Accreditation criteria for international Level 8 (PhD) higher education and research programmes.

²⁵ Documents provided as Annex C

International evaluation process - continued		
No.	Stage of the process	Brief description
1	Analysis of the application for evaluation and accreditation received and its feasibility	Upon receipt of an application for international evaluation/accreditation, Hcéres carries out an analysis (letter of intent and characterisation sheet, where necessary), by seeking information about the requesting entity, the country, the higher education system and the quality assurance framework. Preliminary discussions are held to obtain additional information and clarification of the scope of this application. The guide to the evaluation/accreditation of international higher education and research institutions, and the evaluation standards are sent to the entity.
2	Prior contact with the local quality assurance agency (if there is one) and the diplomatic post	Prior to the actual evaluation procedure, contact is established with the national agency for the country concerned in order to inform it and possibly involve it in the process undertaken by Hcéres. The French diplomatic post in the country concerned is contacted for the same reason and in order to obtain information about the requesting entity, the local, regional, national, political, economic, social and cultural context, possible security problems, etc.
3	Exploratory on-site/online visit	During an exploratory visit to the site, Hcéres representatives meet with the stakeholders and users who are likely to be involved in the evaluation process. The purpose of this visit is to identify and list the entity's expectations, understand its specificities, and inform the institution about Hcéres and the characteristics of its evaluations (methodologies, reference systems). It is also an opportunity to conduct a second analysis of the feasibility and relevance of the evaluation/accreditation process, taking into account the local context, as well as the economic, social, legal and even political realities and constraints: the Hcéres team may inform the entity that the initial elements and observations suggest that the entity is not yet ready to engage in the process, and the procedure may be stopped at this stage. A detailed description of the self-evaluation file that the entity will be required to provide can also be presented on this occasion, and discussions on the agreement to be signed can then begin.
4	Drafting of the agreement	Upon their return from the exploratory visit, the DEI's teams write their report on the visit, draw up the budget and the scheduling details for the evaluation, and incorporate them into the (bilingual) agreement, which is discussed with the requesting entity and any external partners prior to its validation and signature. If other evaluation agencies are involved, the coordinating agency for the procedure must be identified in the agreement.
5	Preparation for the evaluation	The two-person team in charge of the evaluation recruits members of the panel from the Hcéres pool of experts (on the EDM system), according to the type of evaluation (study programme, institution or doctorate), and identifies any conflicts of interest or special-interest ties among the chosen experts. They systematically include academic experts and a student expert and may include experts from the socio-economic world and administrative experts. These experts are approved by the department heads and then presented to the institution, which must then flag up any conflicts of interest that might not have been detected by Hcéres. At the same time, the appointed experts sign a declaration of interests (Annex F) and a declaration of commitments and confidentiality (Annex G) on the EDM system.
6	Preparation for the visit	Once the entity has provided its self-evaluation report (SER), Hcéres' teams check that it conforms to Hcéres' expectations and carry out a preliminary analysis before sending it to the experts, together with the report on the exploratory visit. The practical organisational arrangements for the evaluation (transport, accommodation, visas and the organisation any security that might be required for the experts on site) are jointly managed by Hcéres' teams and the evaluated entity.

International evaluation process – continued		
6	Preparation for the visit (continued)	Hcéres' teams draw up a list of interviews and the visit schedule in consultation with the Chair of the panel. A preparatory meeting is organised by Hcéres to finalise the visit with the experts and to remind them of the methodology to be applied.
7	On-site/online visit	The committee is accompanied by one or two Hcéres staff members, depending on the scope of the evaluation activities. The visit schedule provides for meetings with a representative sample of all categories of stakeholders in the institution (students, professors, administrative staff), and also with external partners (academics, companies, local authorities), depending on the subject of the evaluation (study programmes, PhD programmes training or the institution).
8	Invoicing	The evaluation mission is invoiced in two stages: first, upon delivery of the SER, and second, upon delivery of the evaluation report.
9	Drafting of the evaluation report	Approximately one month after the visit, the panel sends a draft report to Hcéres. This report is proofread and commented upon by Hcéres' in-house editorial committee, which checks its consistency and quality. Ten weeks after the visit, Hcéres organises the post-evaluation meeting in order to hold a final discussion with the panel and finalise the "provisional" report that is sent to the institution, which has the right to challenge its findings. When accreditation is sought by the entity, the panel of experts also formulates an accreditation opinion in light of the corresponding criteria.
10	Response phase and publication of the report	The response phase for the evaluation report is based on two items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a letter of formal comments (on factual errors, misunderstandings, etc.). The panel considers and addresses such remarks at its discretion. The report amended in this manner is referred to as "final"; - a letter of "observations" (written by the institution's governing body), which is published with the final report. All of these items are sent to the institution and published on the Hcéres website.
11	Accreditation	The accreditation procedure is optional and only takes place at the request of the evaluated entity. Like the evaluation, accreditation is based on very precise criteria in terms of the expected objectives and actions undertaken. The Chair of the panel submits a non-prescriptive accreditation opinion to the Accreditation Commission. The Accreditation Commission, which is independent of the panel, studies and examines the conformity of the documents produced. After deliberation, the Accreditation Commission comes to a decision. The final evaluation report, the accreditation opinion, and the institution's official letter of observations are published on the Hcéres website. The evaluated entity is informed of the results of the accreditation process and receives an official document attesting thereto.
12	Follow-up to the evaluation (and accreditation, if applicable)	In the event of a partial accreditation decision (2 or 3 years), Hcéres requests a follow-up report on the points for which accreditation was conditionally granted. This report is analysed by two or three experts and the Chair of the panel for the previous evaluation. A virtual visit, and if necessary an on-site counter-visit are then organised. This is followed by the drafting of a detailed, reasoned opinion on accreditation (following the same process as before), and then a further examination by the Accreditation Commission, which decides whether or not to extend the accreditation by two or three years.

7. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Hcéres evaluations and analyses must meet a large number of requirements with regard to professional ethics and European quality assurance principles, among others. To satisfy these requirements, Hcéres has implemented an in-house quality assurance system in support of all its activities, its objectives and its strategic plan.

7.1. Governance

The Hcéres Board plays a central role in the quality control of the evaluations. It is responsible for debating and approving the evaluation standards and methodologies.

Drawing on its expertise, its knowledge of the environment and the diversity of its members' profiles, it ensures that the High Council carries out its missions, and that its methodologies comply with the principles underlying the evaluation process: objectivity, transparency and equal treatment for all evaluated institutions. Representatives of foreign quality assurance agencies provide the expertise required for evaluation activities and to ensure compliance with European standards. All higher education stakeholders are involved in the High Council's activities through the Board.

By taking into consideration the reports it receives, the Board also ensures that Hcéres' organisational procedures enable it to achieve its objectives, and deliberates on any changes that may be required.

The Executive Committee, consisting of the President, department heads, the Secretary General and the Head of Internal Affairs, is in charge of the in-house Quality Assurance system, together with the Quality Delegation attached to the General Secretariat. It meets on a weekly basis.

7.2. Quality approach

Since its inception, Hcéres has adopted a global approach to quality assurance (plan / do / check / act), which, when applied to evaluation, can be summarised in the following manner:



The improvement cycle for Hcéres' methodologies and reference systems requires regular feedback, both from the experts involved and from the representatives of the evaluated entities. This enables the activities to be adapted to suit the objectives that have been set, and to take account of the regular changes to the regulatory framework.

7.3. The Quality framework for evaluation activities

The quality requirements are described in the following documents:

- The **Evaluation Charter**²⁶. This is a cornerstone of the evaluation carried out by Hcéres and reflects its fundamental ethical commitments. It sets out the objectives that the institution has set for itself, and its main ethical principles, namely: the efficient conduct of the evaluation (competence, professionalism and frequency); the impartiality of the evaluation (equal treatment, independence of results, integrity of the experts, and collegiality of the evaluation), and finally, the adoption of a respectful attitude towards the evaluated entities (diversity and autonomy,

²⁶ Document provided as Annex D.

transparency and publicity, confidentiality). The charter is published on the website and is also approved individually by each of the experts via the EDM/Pool of experts application.

- The **official status** of the experts, scientific advisors, and project managers²⁷, based on the Evaluation Charter, set out the missions and roles of these key players in the evaluation, and the ethical framework. They are sent to the people recruited for these roles.
- **Declaration of interests**²⁸: to guarantee the independence of its evaluations, Hcéres asks all of its members, whether they are representatives of the Board, permanent employees, scientific advisors, project managers or experts, to declare the positions they have held during the five years prior to taking up their duties, as well as their mandates and interests during this same period in the institutions or organisations to be evaluated by the High Council. This declaration system is integrated into the EDM/Pool of experts application for experts.

7.4. A professional application – the cornerstone of evaluation management

The number and frequency of the evaluations that Hcéres is required to carry out have led it to develop a tailor-made information system. All of the evaluation procedures employed are managed via the EDM/Pool of experts application, which is actually a combination of two combined applications:

- an Electronic Document Management (EDM) system;
- a database of experts (Pool of experts).

These two applications are linked and used by Hcéres staff and experts.

Each evaluation is created in the EDM system, and a panel is assigned to it.

Key information is entered into the evaluation section in preparation for the evaluation: location, date and time of visit, name and contact details of the head of the entity being evaluated, main dates of meetings planned during the evaluation procedure, Hcéres teams in charge of the procedure, etc.

The pool of experts is used to establish panels of experts. Potential experts can be added to this pool and missions can be assigned to them. It is also used to compile the experts' files: a professional file attesting to their competencies (CV, publications, previous evaluations, etc.), and administrative data enabling the payment of their allowances and mission expenses.

This pool – acting as the interface between Hcéres and the experts – is a central resource for the Hcéres Quality framework. It is enhanced by the integration of new experts proposed by the project leaders, scientific advisors or the evaluated entities, after validation of their profiles:

- when a staff member adds a new expert to the pool, the expert must first read and approve the Evaluation Charter (Annex D);
- after agreeing to the terms of the Charter, experts must complete an information form by providing details of their professional background, entering their key competencies (scientific fields, keywords), listing their main publications and providing administrative information. To finalise the form, the application enables users to sign their "public declaration of interests" (Annex D) electronically, on the basis of the information provided.

Hcéres' teams use the EDM system to form their panels, by recruiting experts from the pool. Emails are sent automatically by the EDM system. Once the panel has been established, the EDM system sends each expert the "declaration of commitments"²⁹, which enables a more detailed and rigorous management of conflicts of interest. By agreeing to its terms, experts declare that they have not, either currently or at any time in the past five years, had any ties of a professional, family-related, personal or financial nature with the evaluated entity or study programme, which might call into question their independence and impartiality. They undertake to maintain strict compliance with the rules of professional secrecy and discretion, before, during, and after the evaluation. If they refuse to sign this declaration of commitment electronically, they will be automatically removed from the panel, and Hcéres staff will subsequently contact them to determine why they did not sign.

Hcéres performs regular updates to maintain the quality of the data relating to the pool. The last updating campaign took place in 2019.

²⁷ Documents provided as Annex E.

²⁸ Template document provided as Annex F.

²⁹ Template document provided as Annex G.

Finally, once the evaluated entity has uploaded the self-evaluation file(s) to the dedicated platform (PELICAN), the files are automatically transferred to the EDM system and associated with the corresponding evaluation. Experts who have signed the declaration of commitment can then gain secure and direct access to the files via the EDM system. Experts benefit from simplified access to the EDM: the expert portal only displays the evaluations to which they are assigned, the Quality documents (Evaluation Charter, expert status), administrative and financial information for the evaluation (rules for the reimbursement of expenses), and of course, access to the permanent "expert file" for any modification.

The EDM system archives the first version of the evaluation report delivered by the Chairs of panels. The application is capable of saving different successive versions of the report. Reports on the Hcéres website can be published automatically via this application. In 2021, to facilitate the production of evaluation reports, Hcéres invested in the development of a collaborative application that will allow panels of experts to work on the same document, which will be entirely formatted by an application called "Sarali". Connected to the EDM system, Sarali also enables the management of access rights to these documents, and the tracking of different interventions on the texts.

These two applications, which are central to the evaluation system, are being constantly enhanced in order to improve the service provided to in-house and external users, and to simplify and automate processes. For example, the preparatory work for the payment of experts' allowances (approximately 500 payments per month) has been partly incorporated into the EDM system. Because the technology used to develop this application is reaching the end of its service life, a complete redesign of the application is envisaged for the 2021/2022 period. This redesign will also be an opportunity to improve the user experience and develop tools for managing and monitoring activities, which remain inadequate at present.

7.5. Management and monitoring of the quality of evaluations

In addition to the above-mentioned measures, tools for managing and monitoring the in-house Quality Assurance System are used by the various departments and services:

- periodic activity-monitoring meetings: weekly Executive Committee meetings, department meetings, and support service meetings (involving the Secretary General, heads of departments and heads of services);
- documented quality assurance procedures to describe the internal processes of departments and services, their functioning, the roles of each person, and the control points. Where necessary, they are accompanied by forms to facilitate the transmission of information between departments and/or services;
- shared tools for managing orders, the operation of applications, etc.;
- working groups launched after the external evaluation of 2016 and the publication of the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan: an "Experts" group, whose work led to a video presenting the role of experts and to the updating of the pool of experts; a "Training" working group, which led Hcéres to invest in a video-conferencing platform in 2018, and added remote webinars and video tutorials to the training methods for its experts, etc.

This in-house Quality Assurance system ensures that Hcéres conducts its missions in accordance with its ethical principles, while minimising the risks in an ongoing drive for progress and the continuous improvement of all its internal processes.

8. HCÉRES' INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Hcéres' expertise and know-how on the international scene enhance the institution's reputation, credibility and influence. The roll-out of its missions – constantly growing until the COVID-19-related pandemic – undoubtedly serves to improve Hcéres' operational efficiency. The DEI (Europe and International Department) team has been strengthened and now includes three full-time project managers, a part-time (50%) assistant and a permanent scientific advisor. According to the missions to be carried out, the DEI uses five to six scientific advisors from the Department of Academic Programme Evaluation (DEF). The DEI provides a range of tailor-made services for all international higher education and research institutions that request its support. These are based on four areas:

- Participation in the development of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework

The DEI plays an active role in European debates and projects on quality assurance in higher education via the international networks (ENQA, ECA, INQAAHE, EuniQ, etc.), and contributes in this way to reflection on best practices and their dissemination.

As a result, members of the DEI now occupy senior posts in this field: the director of the DEI has become Vice-President of ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), while a DEI project manager was elected President of ECA (European Consortium of Accreditation) in 2019. Hcéres' increased involvement in the governance of major European networks enables it to play an active role in events, and to initiate and organise projects.

The staff of Hcéres, the DEI, and also from other departments and services attend conferences on a regular basis, including the European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF), Campus France meetings, and the ECA and ENQA seminars.

In addition, Hcéres is one of the founding members of the FRAQ-Sup network,³⁰ which brings together educational quality assurance agencies whose activities are conducted wholly or partially in French. In this capacity, Hcéres organised the FRAQ-Sup network's third colloquium on the topic of "International orientation and French-speaking countries: what added value for the quality of higher education?" (*Ouverture internationale et francophonie : Quelle plus-value pour la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur ?*) on 25 June 2018. This event was attended by more than 80 participants, including representatives of institutions from several African countries. The Head of Quality at Hcéres is chairing the network for the 2020/2021 period.

Hcéres took part in draft phase of the DEQAR project (creation of the database of reports published by European quality assurance agencies led by EQAR), and regularly submits national evaluation reports related to the ESG (programmes, doctoral schools and institutions) to the database.

- Partnerships for international projects

Hcéres participates in numerous projects, financed by the European Commission in particular, on global quality assurance issues in higher education.

Since 2019, the DEI has been participating in the "thematic Peer Group C on Quality assurance³¹" under the Bologna Process, which brings together different working groups collaborating on quality, accreditation and recognition issues, in close cooperation with the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. Hcéres is also a partner in the ESQA project³² on stakeholder involvement in external quality assurance activities.

Last year, an important partnership was entered into with Azerbaijan, in the framework of the European twinning project entitled "Support for strengthening higher education in Azerbaijan." Beyond this project, the internationalisation of research and the dissemination of best practices have continued with the development of postgraduate quality assurance in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Ukraine (C3QA), and the creation of quality assurance systems for higher education in Kazakhstan and Ukraine (EDUQAS). Hcéres participates in an average of 5 to 10 applications for European calls for projects per year.

- Assistance with the development of quality assurance policies and support to help foreign countries or agencies define or improve their quality assurance policies

In 2018 and 2019, representatives of Hcéres took part in European projects help Algeria develop a national quality assurance system for higher education, and train senior managers of the future agency.

³⁰ <https://www.fraq-sup.fr/>

³¹ <https://www.ehea.info/page-peer-group-C-QA>

³² <https://esqa.ro/>

In 2019, in a mission run by the French Development Agency (AFD), the DEI was asked to support and participate in the launch of a quality assurance agency in Lebanon. In addition, several delegations of visitors from Middle Eastern and sub-Saharan African countries were hosted in France.

The key issue for these international colleagues was to identify and develop a precise understanding of our working methods, in order to take inspiration from the best practices identified and implemented by Hcéres over the past few years.

During the past period, Peru requested the DEI's assistance in setting up a quality assurance system along the lines of those existing in Europe. Hcéres has signed cooperation agreements with two Peruvian government institutions: SINEACE (Sistema Nacional de Evaluación, Acreditación y Certificación de la Calidad Educativa) and SUNEDU (Superintendencia Nacional de Educación Universitaria). Annual activity programmes have been drawn up, including exchanges of best practices, discussion groups on evaluation standards and processes, and participation in seminars.

Hcéres is also a partner of the Central American Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CCA), a regional organisation based in Panama with which Hcéres conducts joint evaluations.

In addition, a new agreement was signed with the Senegalese National Authority for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Research and Innovation (ANAQ-Sup) in January 2020, which provides for exchanges of information on evaluation policies and procedures, the organisation of events, and participation in evaluation activities.

Since 2020, Hcéres has also been working to establish common standards with Mexico's Interinstitutional Committee for the Evaluation of Higher Education (*Comité Interinstitucional para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior* – CIEES).

- **Evaluation and accreditation abroad**

The DEI is guided by Hcéres' core principles in its proposals – outside the national scope – for evaluation and accreditation processes (covering study programmes or institutions) in several stages: an exploratory mission, followed by evaluation and accreditation (see §7.3.). The purpose of the exploratory mission is to define the expectations of the evaluated entity and understand the context in which it operates. Requests for overseas evaluation come mainly from countries outside the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In 2019, around ten exploratory missions were conducted in Poland, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide an overview of the entity's strengths and weaknesses, and to formulate recommendations. Before the pandemic, these missions were constantly growing: in 2019, twelve institutions sought the DEI's expertise across the globe, from Central America (three universities in El Salvador and one in Honduras), to Luxembourg, Lebanon and Djibouti. In 2019, the DEI also evaluated 32 international study programmes, ranging from bachelor's degrees to doctoral programmes.

9. COMPLIANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE ESG (EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES)

The standards set out in Part 3 of the ESG are equally applicable to all forms of evaluation (evaluation of training programmes, evaluation of institutions, international evaluations etc.). They are therefore applied in their entirety by the agency.

9.1 - ESG 3.1: Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

The Law³³ which defines Hcéres' missions clearly puts evaluation at the heart of the agency's activities. It also stipulates that periodic evaluation must be conducted on the basis of objective criteria that are pertinent to the organisation under evaluation, taking inspiration from international best practices.

The agency's additional activities have also expanded, particularly the production of analyses and studies of higher education and the task of coordinating national policy on research integrity. The scope of Hcéres' evaluations over the current 5-year period extends to almost 5,300 study programmes, including doctoral schools, and around 310 institutions, not forgetting evaluation of 2,500 research units.

Furthermore, from 2022 onwards, the law identifies Hcéres as the organisation responsible for coordinating national evaluation bodies in the fields of research and higher education.

Hcéres' brand image is embodied by its logo, emblazoned with the motto "evaluation and quality", which makes its core mission perfectly clear to the public.

At the start of each new evaluation campaign, the evaluation principles and objectives are presented at the kick-off meetings. If the evaluation forms part of a broader process of contractualisation and accreditation for training programmes, Hcéres also sets itself the task of assisting institutions with the continuous improvement of their practices and the reinforcement of their internal quality assurance efforts. Hcéres also submits proposals to the Ministry of Higher Education, contributing to the development of the national evaluation system while striving to meet the expectations of stakeholders. In light of its regularly-expanding remit, and also the development of internal quality assurance within institutions, Hcéres proposed that the ministry, with specific regard to the accreditation of institutions, should adapt the evaluation system for undergraduate programmes by focusing on evaluating the overall range of programmes on offer (cf. 6.2.)

The Board, Hcéres' governing body, is representative of all the stakeholders in the evaluation process: researchers, engineers, research and teaching staff, student representatives nominated by student associations, along with a number of qualified figures, including members of European quality assurance agencies. Furthermore, the evaluation departments work hand-in-hand with evaluation stakeholders, consulting them during the process of revising the evaluation standards. Feedback is an essential component of all evaluation procedures, giving stakeholders the opportunity to express their opinions and make proposals.

The strategic plan for 2016-2020 defined quality objectives and an improvement strategy for the institution; published on the Hcéres website,³⁴ this plan ended at the end of the outgoing president's term of office. The drafting of the new strategic plan will incorporate the guiding principles set out by the new Hcéres executive team.

The additional missions entrusted to Hcéres, including those associated with the Science and Technology Observatory (OST) and the Office for Research Integrity (Ofis), are testament to the recognition Hcéres

³³ Research Programming Law 2020-1674 of 24 December 2020, cited in §4.2, p 11.

³⁴ <https://www.hceres.fr/fr/publications/plan-strategique-2016-2020>

has earned from public institutions of higher education. The new website sets out clearly and in detail the full panoply of missions³⁵ entrusted to Hcéres, identifying those which fall within the remit of the ESG³⁶.

9.2 - ESG 3.2: Official Status

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

Formally established by Law 2013-660 of 22 July 2013 (Article 90), Hcéres is an independent administrative authority (AAI), a status specially created in French administrative law for public structures operating independently of ministerial supervision (cf. § 5.1.).

The Research Programming Law 2020-1674 of 24 December 2020 states that the organisation will take on a new status as an independent public authority (API) as of 1st January 2022, thus reinforcing Hcéres' independence.

Not only is Hcéres responsible for the evaluation of the training programmes, research units and institutions specified in the applicable legal texts; the Research Programming Law of December 2020 also designates Hcéres as the organisation responsible for coordinating national evaluation bodies. These legislative changes have been made in recognition of Hcéres' expertise and legitimacy in the field.

At the international level, the expertise and legitimacy of Hcéres are also recognised, as illustrated by the number and diversity of countries from all continents that call on Hcéres for evaluations: Panama, Burkina Faso, Qatar, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Russia etc. Some countries also use Hcéres evaluations directly into their national frameworks and use them as a basis for accreditation, e.g. Luxembourg, Armenia and Vietnam have confirmed the legitimacy of Hcéres evaluations abroad.

9.3 - ESG 3.3: Independence

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

- Organisational independence

Hcéres' independence from government agencies is guaranteed by its status as an independent administrative authority and, from 1st January 2022 onwards, as an independent public authority. This status is conferred upon "administrative organisations acting on behalf of the state, and possessing real power, without being subject to the authority of the government." (See § 5.1.).

Moreover, the members of the Hcéres Board are appointed for four-year terms and cannot be recalled, and the same applies to the president.

- Operational independence

While all stakeholders in evaluations are systematically consulted by the departments during the process of drafting or reviewing evaluation standards and methodologies, the writing of these documents remains the preserve of the departments' internal teams; the observations made by stakeholders are studied and discussed by the executive teams before being taken into account. The Board is requested to deliberate upon the materials proposed by the departments and discussed by the Executive Committee.

The recruitment of experts remains the responsibility of heads of department, informed by the proposals of the scientific advisors in charge of evaluations, who determine the range of competencies and profiles required to make up a successful panel, and then search the expert database or other sources for experts meeting these criteria, who are then appointed by order of the Hcéres President.

With regard to the contractualisation process, Hcéres teams draw up an evaluation programme for the year, in coordination with the group of entities to be evaluated.

As per the decree on the organisation of Hcéres,³⁷ the Board is also free to make decisions about its organisation and operations. Within this framework, Hcéres is able to recruit its own administrative and scientific personnel.

³⁵ <https://www.hceres.fr/en/missions>

³⁶ <https://www.hceres.fr/en/european-framework-quality-assurance-higher-education>

³⁷ Decree 2014-1365 of 14 November 2014.

The combined effect of these arrangements is to guarantee the autonomy and operational independence of Hcéres, which is free to define its own methodologies and operating practices.

- Independence of results

Hcéres experts are responsible for writing reports, adhering to the Hcéres methodology and evaluation standards. Before embarking upon an evaluation mission, experts must undertake to abide by the evaluation charter (Annex D), in its most recent version approved by the Board on 6 June 2016, which sets out the principles of impartial evaluation.

The charter demands utmost integrity from the experts, as well as the highest degree of intellectual rigour. It stipulates that their judgements must be founded exclusively upon their analysis of the information gathered, and that experts must undertake to have no contact of a personal nature with the evaluated entity, throughout the duration of the mission.

In order to alert both the public and experts to the risks of conflict or the overlapping of interest, Hcéres has produced a short explanatory video (2'30)³⁸ defining these issues and illustrating their potential impact on the recognition and legitimacy of evaluations. The main objective of this video is to help all concerned to better understand conflicts of interest, to examine their own connections to the evaluated entity and, if in doubt, to inform the Hcéres team.

The proofreading of reports by the Hcéres team has no bearing on their substance: the aim of this review process is simply to ensure that all of the evaluation standards have been covered, and that the style guide has been respected. The joint consultation phase provides an opportunity for the evaluated entity to correct any factual errors in the reports, but not to contest the analysis itself. However, any objections to the substance of the report can be attached to the report in the form of a letter conveying the institution's comments. Since 2013, in order to underline the responsibility of experts and their independence of judgement, evaluation reports have been co-signed by the chair of the evaluation panel, attesting to the collegial dimension of the report, and by the President of Hcéres, confirming compliance with the relevant ethical principles.

9.4 - ESG 3.4: Thematic analysis

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

While working on the evaluation of territorial clusters, and in order to inform debate on this format, Hcéres has produced summary reports, or "summative analysis of integrated evaluation" for entire sites, on several occasions.

When the scheduling of different evaluations on a single site enables such an undertaking, Hcéres may decide to embark on this additional task, which demands an overview all the evaluations that have been conducted (institutions, training programmes, research) and the performance of cross-cutting analyses to provide new insights into the site that is being evaluated.

The summative analysis of integrated evaluation includes the analyses that have been produced along with appendices, including a bibliometric analysis of the cluster prepared by the Science and Technology Observatory (OST). This summative analysis is a tool designed to be used by the executive team responsible for the combined institutions, as well as local, regional and national decision-makers and officials from the relevant ministries, providing a clearer view of the progress made by the territorial cluster and highlighting its strengths, weaknesses and development priorities.

Hcéres has thus far published two such reviews, for the HESAM³⁹ and PSL⁴⁰ clusters.

These activities require a considerable amount of work, combining input from both internal sources, including the scientific advisors tasked with writing integrated summaries of their evaluations of training programmes and research units, and external sources, since overall responsibility for drafting the integrated review rests with one of the chairs of the evaluation panels established for the institutions belonging to the cluster.

³⁸ French version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4bDHznLKQI>

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

³⁹ Hautes Écoles Sorbonne Arts et Métiers Université, known by the acronym HESAM -

https://www.hceres.fr/sites/default/files/media/downloads/05_HESAM_bilanIntegre_complet_V3.pdf

⁴⁰ Université Paris sciences et lettres -

https://www.hceres.fr/sites/default/files/media/downloads/PSL_Bilan%20int%C3%A9gr%C3%A9_02.07.2019.pdf

In 2019, at the request of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and the Ministry of Culture, Hcéres published a "summary and future perspectives" report containing a series of proposals for enhancing the international reputation and influence of French research in the field of archaeology. This report – the first of its kind – characterised all of France's 102 archaeological research units, providing an integrated overview of their theoretical and methodological approaches. Its conclusions highlighted the remarkable scientific standing of French archaeology, the efficiency of its organisation and the diversity of its collaborations. Three new summary reports are currently in progress: one on mathematics, another on genetics and epigenetics, and a third on virology and epidemiology.

Finally, Hcéres also publishes regular reports on the scientific positioning of France in Europe and in the world. The most recent report,⁴¹ published in February 2021, covers the 2005-2018 period; it updates the observations contained in previous versions and builds upon them by analysing different facets: the new panel structure for calls for submissions to the European Research Council (ERC), a comparative analysis of publications produced by Initiatives for Excellence (Idex) projects, and those produced by European and American research universities, and a look at the different scientific profiles of France's regions. The preparation of this report was overseen by Hcéres' Science and Technology Observatory.

9.5 - ESG 3.5: Resources

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

To cover the entirety of its missions, Hcéres was allocated an operating budget of approximately €19 million in 2020.

The agency's primary source of funding is a government grant. The Hcéres budget is debated and voted upon by the French parliament during the annual discussions of the draft finance bill.

This funding falls within the scope of programme 150 "training programmes and university research," action 15 "steering and support for this programme" and also, since 2015, programme 172 "multidisciplinary scientific and technological research."

Hcéres also possesses its own resources, derived from its international evaluation activities, which offset the expenses incurred by such activities, as well as external commissions to produce analyses and indicators for the OST.

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Payroll costs ⁴²	€ 8,946,055	€ 8,870,409	€ 10,302,707	€ 9,860,191
Operating expenses	€ 8,825,497	€ 9,517,108	€ 9,644,603	€ 9,259,618
Expenditure	€ 17,771,552	€ 18,387,517	€ 19,947,310	€ 19,119,809
Own resources	€ 0	€ 318,788	€ 720,260	€ 459,361

Like all public institutions, Hcéres is bound by public accounting standards. As an AAI, soon to become an API, only the French Court of Auditors has the power to order retrospective inspections. An inspection of this nature was conducted in January 2020, but the resulting report has not yet been published. Hcéres is particularly vigilant in its use of public money, and with regard to compliance with public procurement rules.

The Hcéres budget is sufficient to cover all of the evaluations required by law, and to invest in the technological resources required to reinforce and develop the agency's tools. In 2019, for example, the first version of a collaborative report-writing application, known as Sarali, was made available to experts working on Hcéres' evaluations. This tool is connected to Hcéres' electronic document management (EDM) system, and experts are granted access rights enabling them to add their contributions. A revised version, intended to better reflect the realities of the evaluation process and experts' working practices, was delivered in autumn 2020.

⁴¹ <https://www.hceres.fr/fr/publications/la-position-scientifique-de-la-france-dans-le-monde-et-en-europe-2005-2018-ost>

⁴² Payroll costs include the salaries of Hcéres staff as well as the remuneration paid to scientific advisors and experts' fees.

Since the external evaluation of 2016, Hcéres has been able to recruit around fifteen new members of staff, in all departments and teams, in order to keep pace with the expansion of the agency's activities.

As of 31 December 2019, the Hcéres administrative and technical team comprised 117 staff members, who are either civil servants, or else employed on a contractual basis. Depending on the employees' seniority, these contracts are either fixed-term or permanent.

The rules governing the recruitment of contract staff, including their pay scale, were discussed and approved by the Hcéres Board in June 2018. Hcéres is at liberty to handle its own recruitment policy, as long as the stipulated maximum headcount is not exceeded.

Category ⁴³	Natural persons	FTE ⁴⁴	FTEW ⁴⁵
A+	10	9.60	9.93
A	52	50.40	51.32
B	24	23.80	23.73
C	31	30.80	34.31
TOTAL	117	114.16	119.29

Hcéres has implemented a competency management policy for employees, who have annual evaluations and training reviews with their line managers. In 2019, this system allowed Hcéres employees to participate in 184 training programmes, amounting to over 1,507 hours of training.

The Hcéres team also includes scientific advisors (*conseillers scientifiques* – CS), who are seconded or delegated by their institutions for between one and three days each week, and responsible for overseeing the scientific preparation of evaluations. They are lecturers and/or researchers. Hcéres remunerates them for their involvement, and pays a form of compensation to their home institution. This compensation is not included in payroll costs, but is instead considered as an operating expense. In order to offset the impact of increases in the level of compensation requested, Hcéres now uses scientific staff on a mission-by-mission basis. These Scientific Project Managers (*chargés de mission scientifique* – CMS), are primarily recruited by the Department of Research Evaluation. They may oversee between one and five evaluations, and are paid according to the number of missions they complete. They are expected to take on these missions alongside their usual work, which means that no financial compensation is paid to their home institutions.

Furthermore, since 2017, an annual orientation and induction session for new arrivals (administrative and technical staff as well as scientific personnel) has been organised before the start of each new evaluation campaign. Led by the senior management team or other speakers, these sessions provide an opportunity to introduce Hcéres and to discuss the values that underpin our evaluations and our guiding ethical principles, as well as the European context, Hcéres' strategy and commitments, our operating methods and the cross-disciplinary projects currently in progress. The sessions are organised by the Quality and Training Delegation of the General Secretariat.

9.6 - ESG 3.6: Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

The fundamental principles that define the quality and ethics of evaluations are set out in the Evaluation Charter⁴⁶. By clearly spelling out the institution's objectives, this charter also defines our expectations in terms of the professional conduct of individuals involved in evaluations. This charter is publicly available, and systematically sent out to all experts before their recruitment is finalised.

⁴³ A+, A, B and C correspond to the hierarchical and salary levels of the civil service, from the highest to the lowest: category A+ staff have higher responsibilities and higher salaries than category A staff, etc. The category of a civil service job is determined by the level of diploma required for the external competition that enables access to it

⁴⁴ FTE: Full-time equivalent. The FTE count takes into account the work share but not the duration of activity during the year. It gives the number of staff present on a given date, in this case 31/12/2019, corrected for the work share.

⁴⁵ The FTEW is the proportional count of the activity of the agents, measured by their working time ratio and by their period of activity over the year. FTEW (FTE Worked) correspond to the physical workforce weighted by the staff's working time in a full year.

⁴⁶ <https://www.hceres.fr/en/publications/evaluation-charter>

The principal measures adopted by Hcéres to guarantee the quality and ongoing improvement of working practices are described in Chapter 7, which addresses internal quality assurance at the agency. They include:

- Continuous improvement of practices, and systematic feedback processes;
- A quality framework, comprising an evaluation charter (Annex D), definitions of the status of experts and scientific advisors (Annex E), an obligation for all employees to abide by the ethical standards of evaluation, and a strict confidentiality requirement (declarations of commitments signed electronically – Annex G) cf. 7.3;
- Each evaluation is coordinated by a dedicated Hcéres teams (a scientific advisor and a project manager) throughout the procedure, with one of the two representatives accompanying the committees during the visits to ensure that it runs smoothly
- Rigorous selection procedures for experts, including collegial discussions within the departments;
- Systematic declarations of interest for all staff, scientific advisers, coordinators and experts (Annex F);
- Evaluation methodologies which are entirely aligned with the European standards (ESG), publicly available and mindful of the diversity and autonomy of the entities under evaluation. The process of reviewing and improving methodologies and evaluation standards helps to increase the acceptance of Hcéres by institutions, as it guarantees Hcéres' perfect fully alignment with the regulatory framework and stakeholders' expectations. When the ENQA panel refers to "changing the methodology every year", it does not specify that the changes in question are merely improvements to details or wording, introduced for the sake of greater precision and to improve the systems in place, and do not significantly modify the process. These are non-substantial changes that respect the continuity of the existing processes, which are identified via the annual feedback processes, and therefore do not create any differences between the previous and following evaluations. When more substantial modifications are introduced, they are almost always triggered by changes to the legislative or regulatory context of French higher education, which Hcéres cannot ignore. A recent example was the introduction of accreditation, replacing the former approval process for training programmes;
- Initial information for evaluated entities about the composition of panels;
- Published evaluation reports, giving evaluated entities the opportunity to correct any errors and issue a response containing their own observations.

Hcéres is committed to achieving gender parity in its expert panels: the proportion of women on evaluation committees is 46% for panels appointed by the DEI, 42 % for those appointed by the DEE and 40% for those appointed by the DEF.

Hcéres' Quality policy is described in detail on the agency's new website.⁴⁷ To promote the dissemination of a culture of quality, the website also includes a description of the European Quality Assurance Framework.

9.7 - ESG 3.7: Cyclical external review of agencies

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Since the very beginnings of the agency (AERES and now Hcéres), the annual cycle of preparation, organisation and execution of evaluation campaigns has always been based on a continuous improvement approach drawing on annual feedback, resulting in regular improvements. In its present form, the French regulatory framework does not oblige Hcéres to undergo external evaluation. This is a voluntary measure, undertaken in the interests of continuous improvement and full participation in the European framework.

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. Moving beyond these recommendations, Hcéres is committed to analysing their causes and finding more appropriate solutions in the long term, or in incremental steps, in collaboration with

⁴⁷ <https://www.hceres.fr/en/quality-approach>

stakeholders. The implementation of evaluation follow-up procedures with institutions included a discussion phase in order to increase acceptance of the system. The review of the evaluation process for study programmes was also conducted in successive phases, some of which led to improvements, such as the introduction of inspections by panels including student experts.

This self-evaluation report and the ensuing external evaluation process will also inform further discussions among the new governing panel and executive teams.

10.COMPLIANCE WITH PART 2 OF THE ESG

10.1 - ESG 2.1: Consideration of internal quality assurance

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

In this chapter, 12 evaluation standards used in the current Group of evaluations (Group B 2020-2021) are analysed with reference to Part 1 of the ESG.

- **Analysis of evaluation standards used for institutional evaluations**

The evaluation standards for universities were revamped ahead of their implementation in Group B 2020-2021. This review was conducted with a dual objective of producing a more concise and comprehensible version of the standards while also facilitating analysis of the performance of management, and the capacity to demonstrate the effectiveness of actions undertaken by the evaluated universities. The number of standards has been reduced (from 32 to 15), keeping overlaps to a minimum. The clarity and comprehensibility of this new version are enhanced by the fact that each standard is now divided into three levels according to the ESG model: a summary statement; an explanatory box providing further detail of the expectations; a non-exhaustive and non-hierarchical list of criteria to flesh out these requirements, identifying the main subjects on which the university must deliver a substantiated critical analysis.

The institutional evaluation of higher education and research institutions suffers today from not being firmly enough linked to the evaluations of training and research units carried out at a finer level by the research evaluation department (DER) and the academic programme evaluation department (DEF) of Hcéres. One of the challenges of the coming year will be to review the reference framework and the integrated evaluation methodology, bringing together the skills of all the Hcéres departments, with the aim of strengthening the credibility and consistency of the reports. Another of the major projects will consist of developing evaluations to increase their usefulness and impact: the evaluations, which will be more concise, will have to compare the strategies defined by the institutions, the resources they have at their disposal, the management they implement and the results they obtain. This development should result in a more significant reduction in the size of the institutional evaluation standard. The two current standards for higher education and research institutions (university and school) should become one by the end of wave C. This standard will also have to be adapted to the new organisations of institutions made possible by the latest legislative changes (LPR).

STANDARD	A: External evaluation standard for universities (provided as part of Annex A)	
ESG PART 1	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Further analysis
1.1 – Policy for quality assurance	5	The institution is asked to provide details of its continuous improvement approach, and the extent to which it has established a coherent structure for the self-evaluation process, involving both staff and students.
1.2 - Design and approval of programmes	11, 12	The institution is asked to explain the specificities and different objectives of its range of programmes of study. The institution is also invited to explain its choices with regard to the format of training programmes and the conditions for awarding qualifications.

1.3 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	12, 14	The SER should provide evidence of tools to promote the development of students' personal initiatives.
1.4 – Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	14	The institution is expected to demonstrate that it is capable of guaranteeing: 1) the consistency and coordination of the processes which guide students' academic careers; (2) the consistency and correct application of admissions processes and procedures for assessing learning outcomes, awarding diplomas and implementing anti-fraud and/or anti-corruption measures. The SER should also provide details of arrangements put in place for specific user groups.
1.5 - Teaching staff	7, 12	In standards 7 and 12, the institution is invited to explain and analyse its multi-annual human resources policy, specifically in relation to training, with a self-evaluation of its training and support systems for research and teaching staff.
1.6 - Learning resources and student support	2, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	Standards 2, 6, 7 and 8 cover the financial resources deployed by the institution in its general running: the economic model, management dialogue, conditions for allocating resources, employment policies, property management etc. Standards 11, 12 and 13 focus more specifically on resources allocated to training: distribution of resources, financial sustainability of the portfolio of programmes on offer, resources devoted to innovative teaching methods, documentary resources etc. Standards 14 and 15 target 1) critical analysis of the systems in place to support students with their academic careers, from programme and career guidance through to job market integration, with a particular focus on instruments designed to boost academic success, and which take into account the specific needs of certain groups; 2) critical analysis of the resources devoted to ensuring the quality of life of students.
1.7 - Information management	2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 14	Standard 2 covers the management indicators and dashboards used by the institution. Standard 6 deals with budget programming, management dialogue and the organisation of the information system. Standard 7 deals with tools for monitoring staff numbers and skills in the context of human resources policy. Standard 8 deals with indicators for monitoring the property policy. Standards 9 and 10 address indicators relating to the institution's policy on research and its exploitation. Standards 11 and 14 deal specifically with the monitoring indicators used to guide changes to the range of programmes offered, including indicators to measure the success and job market integration of students.
1.8 - Public information	4, 10, 12, 14	The provision of public information efforts is covered by standard 4, which states that institutions should be equipped with external communication tools to publicise the results of their work, as well as internal tools to foster a sense of belonging. Standard 10 concerns the presence of a specific communication policy aimed at the economic and socio-cultural sectors (efforts to promote and disseminate scientific culture). Finally, standards 12 and 14 examine the presence of information about study programmes, and particularly the need for students, learners and employers to be involved in the process of defining programme content. The information and guidance available to high-school students and students should also be subject to clearly defined procedures, as should the dissemination of results.
1.9 – On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	9, 11, 12, 14	Standard 9 sets out the expectation that institutions should analyse their own results and measure their overall performance with the help of management indicators. With regard to training programmes, standard 11 states that the evaluation of programmes must consider the consistency of the range of programmes offered; at a more detailed level, standard 12 invites institutions to provide details of the systems and procedures put in place

		for reviewing programme content, with students' associations and socio-economic partners represented on Advisory Boards. Finally, standard 14 addresses the monitoring of the impact of measures taken to maximise students' chances of success, and the use of surveys to track their job market integration.
1.10 - Cyclical external quality assurance	5, 9, 11	In France, external evaluation is a compulsory requirement for the contractualisation of institutions with their supervising ministries. External evaluations must be conducted every 5 years. Standard 5 verifies that institutions have a quality policy in place which includes a precise definition of the self-evaluation processes required by the periodical external evaluations which are generally compulsory for institutions (depending on their status). In particular, external evaluation committees are invited to give their opinion on these processes. Standards 9 and 11 also invite institutions to provide details, where relevant, of the internal and external evaluation processes applied to their constituent research units, which may or may not be associated with strategic management bodies such as a Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), as well as the processes in place to review and update the range of programmes on offer, when they are based on internal or external analytical tools.

STANDARD	B: Hcéres evaluation standards for the external evaluation of institutions of higher education (specialist institutions/schools) (provided as part of Annex A)	
ESG PART 1	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Further analysis
1.1 – Policy for quality assurance	7	The institution must demonstrate that it is committed to the continuous improvement of its organisation and activities. This process must be led by the management team and involve staff, students and internal structures.
1.2 - Design and approval of programmes	17	The institution must show that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training programmes are designed using a process based upon learning outcomes. - Students, learners and employers are involved in this process. - The institution ensures that its programmes are registered with in the French National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP), and ensures the systematic production of a descriptive appendix or a diploma supplement for each programme.
1.3 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	18 26	The institution must show that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The systems in place for teaching and the awarding of degrees meet the expectations of students and partners, as well as the educational objectives contained in their training policy. - students are involved in the institution's training policy, and are stakeholders in the evaluation of training programmes.
1.4 – Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	24	The institution should develop consistent measures to provide guidance for high-school pupils and students, and implement a clear information and guidance policy for different groups of students at all levels. This policy should include measures adapted to specific groups, and particularly to students with disabilities. The institution analyses the results and identifies the progress made in all student-support schemes throughout the reference period.
1.5 - Teaching staff	11	The institution must provide details of its policy for supporting and training research and teaching staff with both their educational activities and the guidance of their research work. The institution takes account of all the activities carried out by professors and teaching staff in its recruitment and promotion policy and in its management of human resources. The institution demonstrates that the recruitment of non-teaching staff is consistent with the institution's objectives; it ensures the renewal of skills within the institution.

1.6 - Learning resources and student support	10	The institution should show that an annual management dialogue exists between senior management and the institution's main constituent entities, addressing questions of strategy, objectives and resources. The human, material and financial resources devoted to study programmes are known, the costs are evaluated, and the institution possesses tools for monitoring the activities. The policy of allocating resources to student life reflects the university's commitments; the students are involved in this policy.
	20	
	25	
1.7 - Information management	9	The institution uses an information system (IS) that meets its management needs and facilitates its missions, both centrally and within its internal entities.
1.8 - Public information	8	The institution should demonstrate that: - Internal communication serves to inform staff and students, and boost their involvement. - The external communication methods employed by the institution, and also by its training components and research structures, are consistent with the institutional strategy; they are adapted to the different target audiences. - The institution implements an information and integration policy for different groups of students at all levels of education, publishing the results of surveys asking alumni about their career progress and further studies.
	20	
	24	
1.9 – On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	16	The institution uses evaluation and foresight mechanisms that enable it to develop its strategic research orientations. The institution develops its study programmes according to formalised periodic review procedures and by taking into consideration the needs of its socio-economic environment, based on the recommendations of advisory boards, in particular. The institution defines the procedures for assessing learning outcomes and disseminates them to students.
	20	
	24	
1.10 - Cyclical external quality assurance		In France, external evaluation is a compulsory requirement for institutions seeking contractualisation with their supervising ministries. External evaluations must be conducted every five years.

- **Analysis of the standards used for the evaluation of training programmes, doctoral schools and colleges**

The evaluation standards applied to undergraduate training programmes (Bachelor's degrees) and Master's programmes (provided as part of Annex B) were developed using the same principles, and are thus analysed in the same table.

STANDARDS	C: Hcéres standard for the evaluation of Bachelor's degree programmes D: Hcéres standard for the evaluation of Master's degree programmes		
	C	D	
ESG PART 1	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Further analysis
1.1 – Policy for quality assurance	5-4	5-4	The aim of these evaluation standards is to evaluate the implementation of a process of continuous improvement, based on a self-evaluation process in which both teaching staff and students are involved. Internal evaluations must include: advisory boards, the analysis of teaching content by students and graduates, analysis of feedback and decisions taken as a result. The results must be shared beyond the confines of the training programme in question, particularly with the institution's training and student life committees. The evaluation standards also examine measure to raise awareness of research integrity and ethics (a clearly established and widely adopted system for detecting plagiarism, fraud and corruption; formal appeals procedures within the institution).
	3-8	3-8	

1.2 - Design and approval of programmes	1-1	1-1	<p>The evaluation standards seek to ensure that the educational objectives, along with the knowledge and skills imparted, are coherent, explicit, clearly expressed and understood by students and other stakeholders. They examine the structure of study programmes with regard to students' career prospects, and verify the consistency of these programmes with the available opportunities (input from professionals, partnerships, practical training, internships and integration of career planning).</p> <p>The standards examine the methods used to assess knowledge and skills, students' understanding of these methods, and the attribution of ECTS credits in accordance with national and European directives.</p>
	4-2	4-2	
	3-1	3-1	
	2-3 ; 3-4	2-3 ; 3-4	
	4-3	4-3	
1.3 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	3-1	3-1	<p>The evaluation standards verify that training programmes are divided into study pathways enabling the progressive specialisation of students and the personalisation of their programmes in accordance with their knowledge and competencies and their professional projects: teaching organised around a common core forming a knowledge and competency base that is consistent with the sheet published in the National Register of Professional Qualifications, organisation of teaching semesters into teaching modules and competency blocks, a diverse array of educational methods (interdisciplinarity, innovation, serious games, "active amphitheatre" etc.), scientific approaches for master's programmes, and competency portfolios. They consider the extent to which training is tailored to different groups (lifelong learning, work-study programmes, recognition of prior learning and recognition of advanced studies) and its capacity to welcome students with specific needs (students with disabilities, elite athletes, students in employment etc.).</p> <p>In addition to input from professionals, the presence of modules developing knowledge of the business world and processes with institutional support (internships, projects), the evaluation standards stipulate the need for an observatory for job market integration or a comparable body, helping students with job hunting and the development of their professional projects.</p> <p>The standards verify the presence of personalised tools to maximise students' chances of success (a learning contract for each student, setting out their study pathway, specific pace of learning and any support measures designed to foster academic success), and students' awareness of such resources.</p> <p>The standards consider evaluation methods and the understanding that stakeholders have of them: the display of information, examination panels, attribution of ECTS, compensation, specific certifications where relevant, and student involvement.</p>
	3-3	3-3	
	3-5	3-5	
	3-2	3-2	
	3-4	3-4	
1.4 – Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	3-7		
	5-1	5-1	<p>The evaluation standards examine the transparency of recruitment processes, the quantitative and qualitative monitoring of teaching staff (standard initial training or work-linked training, continuing education, etc.), the attractiveness of programmes, flows of students (scholarship students, students from other regions, international students etc.) and the manner in which such data are analysed. They verify that graduate outcomes are monitored, as well as the outcomes for</p>
	5-2	5-2	
	4-3 and 2-4	4-3 and 2-4	
	4-4	3-6	

		4-4	<p>those changing programmes or leaving without qualifications. Results should be publicly available.</p> <p>The standards also explore the specific valued added by any international exchanges included in study programmes, and measures to recognise students' dedication.</p> <p>They examine the extent to which opportunities for further study and job market integration are compatible with the training provided, and the extent to which students and other stakeholders are aware of them.</p> <p>They ensure that the competencies acquired are listed in the diploma supplement, which recounts each student's entire academic curriculum.</p>
1.5 - Teaching staff	4-1 4-4 2-2	4-1 4-4 2-2	<p>The evaluation standards seek to ascertain the presence of a qualified, diverse programme of training for teaching staff, tailored to the content of the different programmes and including a focus on expression of competencies, with input from external speakers from the social and economic sectors, a list of whom is available. They examine its openness to research and scientific methods.</p>
1.6 - Learning resources and student support	4-2 3-6	4-2 3-7	<p>The evaluation standards examine the available resources: the formal structure of the organisation, administrative and pedagogical resources (secretarial offices, rooms, libraries, computer rooms, etc.), digital resources (digital working environment, interactive teaching practices, compatibility with the needs of different groups etc.).</p>
1.7 - Information management	3-4 5-1 5-2 5-3	3-5 5-1 5-2 5-3	<p>The standards consider the existence and quality of a job market integration team or equivalent structure to help students find internships and develop their professional projects. They examine the manner in which the programme takes into account student numbers and profiles, shares information about student outcomes, and seeks to ascertain and analyse information about alumni (pursuing further studies or professional careers).</p>
1.8 - Public information	2-1 4-1 1-1 4-2 1-2 5-2	2-1 4-1 1-1 4-2 1-2 5-2	<p>The evaluation standards verify that the programme is positioned in the context of the higher education sector, and in the local, regional, national and international environments. They also consider the positioning of each programme within the broader range of study programmes offered by the institution and the site, while specifying the links between specialisms.</p> <p>They check that each study programme publishes a list of its contributors, its teaching objectives, the knowledge and competencies to be acquired, and the opportunities for further study and job market integration. They ensure that details of the meetings of the management committee, consultative bodies and advisory board are published in a specific announcement, and check that measurements of student success are known to stakeholders and are published, along with the results of graduate surveys.</p>
1.9 - On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	5-4	5-4	<p>The evaluation standards examine the formalised internal evaluation (self-evaluation) system put in place by the institution for the study programme, and how it is shared with stakeholders.</p>
1.10 - Cyclical external quality assurance	5-4	5-4	<p>In France, external evaluation is a compulsory requirement for programmes seeking accreditation from their supervising ministries. External evaluations must be conducted every five years.</p>

The evaluation standards applied to doctoral schools and colleges (provided as part of Annex B) were developed using the same principles, and are thus analysed in the same table.

evaluation standards	E: Hcéres evaluation standards for doctoral schools F: Hcéres evaluation standards for doctoral colleges (or equivalent structures)		
	E	F	
ESG PART 1	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Further analysis
1.1 – Policy for quality assurance	1-2 2-3 2-2	3.3 2.4	The evaluation standards consider the self-evaluations conducted by doctoral colleges and doctoral schools (EDs), the involvement of doctoral students in these evaluations and the consultation of EDs (and member institutions for the self-evaluation of colleges). This requires the definition of procedures and indicators for evaluating their activities. Institutional structures can thus adapt their operations and fine-tune their projects, working together cohesively and in accordance with the development strategies of their cluster. They must ensure that the findings of these self-evaluations (and the resulting changes) are shared with all stakeholders, partners and users. The evaluation standards consider the implementation of awareness and prevention efforts targeting various forms of conflict, discrimination, harassment and infringements of professional ethics or research integrity.
1.2 - Design and approval of programmes	1-4 2-3	2.3 2.4	One key objective of these evaluation standards is to assess the extent to which doctoral programmes and academic policies are designed with a view to promoting doctoral studies and optimising career prospects at different levels: local, national and international. They consider the development of training programmes, the involvement of EDs, research units and doctoral colleges in their design, the extent to which training programmes correspond to the scientific remits, profiles and requirements of doctoral students and also the professional outcomes of the latter, as well as the assessment of training programmes by doctoral students themselves. The standards also examine the cross-cutting competencies and qualifications provided by the training programmes and doctoral curriculum, as well as the presence of doctoral degrees on the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP).
1.3 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	1-3 2-2 2-3	2.4	The evaluation standards seek to ensure that a doctoral charter defining the mutual commitments made by doctoral students and supervisors is in place, and that individual monitoring committees are adapted to the profile of each doctoral student, in order to monitor the progress of their work, their preparations for subsequent careers and the availability of sufficient material and financial conditions as well as academic support, along with mechanisms to prevent all forms of conflict and discrimination. The evaluation standards take into account the involvement of doctoral students in the evaluation of their study programmes, and in the organisation and evaluation of academic or professional events. They also seek to ensure that doctoral students play an active and autonomous role in the evaluation of their own competencies, and that they have their own

			individual portfolios, consistent with the registration of their doctoral programmes with the RNCP.
1.4 – Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	1-3 2-1 2-2 2-4 3-1	2.2 2.4 2.5	The evaluation standards seek to ensure that doctoral schools and colleges have established precise rules for the recruitment of doctoral students and the funding of theses, as well as clear monitoring and guidance practices for doctoral students (doctoral charter, training contract, individual monitoring committee) and rules for completing and defending theses within a specified period of time. All these rules must be transparent to all stakeholders, and adapted to different individual circumstances. The evaluation standards for doctoral colleges also consider the support they provide for international mobility. The evaluation standards also invite institutions to focus on identifying the cross-disciplinary competencies of their doctoral students, creating competency portfolios and registering doctorates with the RNCP.
1.5 - Teaching staff	2-1	2.4	The evaluation standards seek to assess the extent to which the rules regarding the supervision of doctoral students (number of students, supervision arrangements, management of joint supervision structures, handling of specific circumstances) are discussed at the collegiate level and applied at doctoral school level. They also consider the training provided to doctoral supervisors with regard to guidance, ethics and research integrity, as well the fight against discrimination and harassment and, on a more general level, the links between research and society.
1.6 - Learning resources and student support	1-3 1-4 2-2	2.2 3.2	The evaluation standards check that thesis-funding policies are discussed within doctoral colleges, that they are consistent with the objectives of EDs and their self-evaluations, and that EDs are capable of managing all types of financing arrangements and ensuring that doctoral students have sufficient financial resources and adequate working conditions. They consider the compatibility of reception and integration systems with the different needs of doctoral students, and examine the international outreach policies of both doctoral schools and colleges. They also consider the human, material and financial resources in place, and the implementation of appropriate systems to prevent conflict, discrimination and harassment, but also to minimise the risk of situations leading to students dropping out of their studies.
1.7 - Information management	2-2 3-2 3-3	1.2 2.5 3.3	The standards encourage doctoral schools and colleges to obtain, use and share precise information about curricula that are considered to provide suitable preparation for doctoral studies, the academic pathways followed by doctoral students, and their subsequent outcomes. They examine the involvement of doctoral students and graduates in the creation of alumni networks, at ED and college level, and the implementation of effective systems for monitoring cohorts and using them to develop structures relating to operations, supervision and training, and to enhance the perceptions of the doctoral programme by partners. The standards verify that EDs engage with, analyse and share (both internally and externally) the data they collect. They also ensure that doctoral colleges possess management indicators and data, for all their activities,

			which allow them to analyse their progress and measure the value added, including from their partners' perspectives.
1.8 - Public information	1-2 1-3 3-2	2.5 3.1 3.2	The evaluation standards seek to ascertain that structures are equipped with functional means of communication (both internal and external), enabling them to share key information with their target audiences concerning: organisational and administrative procedures and decision-making processes; research and scientific and/or vocational activities; results and consequences of self-evaluations. They verify the accessibility and clarity of the procedures in place for recruiting doctoral students, and for the theses and other work produced by doctoral students, along with information regarding job-market integration and access to alumni network.
1.9 – On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	1-2 2-3 3-2 3-3	2.5	The evaluation standard for EDs examines the implementation and monitoring of self-evaluation procedures and indicators, whose results are published and used as a basis for improving their overall operations and defining their development projects. Doctoral students are invited to participate in this self-evaluation, and in the evaluation of training programmes. The evaluation standards for doctoral schools and colleges also examine the implementation of appropriate arrangements for monitoring cohorts of PhD graduates, and how they are used to improve the operational aspects of doctoral schools, in addition to their supervision and training of doctoral students.
1.10 - Cyclical external quality assurance			In France, external evaluation is a compulsory requirement for programmes seeking accreditation from their supervising ministries. External evaluations must be conducted every five years.

From the evaluation group C campaign, the Hcéres is committed to a new mode of integrated evaluation of the institution's policy that better integrates the results of the activities of the programmes and research units. The Hcéres will therefore rely on a single standard for evaluating the institution, including the training and student life policies. This standard will be broken down into complementary and simplified standards for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes on the one hand and postgraduate programmes on the other.

- Analysis of evaluation standards used for international evaluations

The links between these evaluation standards and Part 1 of the ESG are shown in the table below. The accreditation criteria should be considered with reference to the corresponding evaluation standards. The standards used for evaluations abroad are provided as Annex C.

REFERENTIELS	G: Hcéres standard for the evaluation of international higher education and research institutions H: Criteria for the accreditation of a higher education institution by Hcéres		
	G	H	
ESG PART 1	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Further analysis
1.1 - Policy for quality assurance	6-1 6-2 1-1-3	6 1	The institution must show that it has defined a quality assurance policy, carried out internally, aimed at continuous improvement and paying particular attention to ethical and deontological aspects.
1.2 - Design and approval of programmes	2.2.1 2.2.2	2	The institution must show that it has defined a learning outcomes-based, student-centred training policy.

1.3 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	2.2.2 3-1 3-2 3-3 2-2-4	2 3	Teaching methods are adapted to all audiences and a clear and legible student pathway is defined from admission to the recognition of skills.
1.4 - Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	3-1 2-2-4	3 2	Student pathways, from orientation to employment, are organised and adapted to the needs of the students to promote their success. These pathways are based on rules known by everyone concerning the admission and progression of students, and the recognition and certification of skills.
1.5 - Teaching staff	5-2 2-3	5 2	The institution has defined a human resources management policy adapted to its objectives, from recruitment to training and evaluation.
1.6 - Learning resources and student support	2.2.3 2.2.2 3-2 3-3	2 3	The institution deploys a policy of student support, documentary resources to support research and training, and creates an environment conducive to student learning.
1.7 - Information management	5-3 2-2-5 3-1	5 2 3	The institution must demonstrate that its management is based on a coherent and complete information system, which is participatory and intended for all stakeholders.
1.8 - Public information	1-3 2-2-5 3-1	1 2 3	The institution regularly provides information on its training programmes and their development. A coherent policy of internal and external communication is developed.
1.9 - Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes	2-2-5 6-1	2 6	The institution provides a monitoring system for its activities and publishes the results. Continuous improvement is part of the institution's strategy.
1.10 - Cyclical external quality assurance	6-1	6	The institution's quality assurance policy has been defined and is adapted to its objectives. The standard looks at whether training is regularly and periodically evaluated in the country.

STANDARDS	I : Hcéres standard for the external evaluation of international bachelor's and master's degree programmes J: Criteria for the accreditation of a study programme by Hcéres		
	I	J	
ESG PART 1	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Further analysis
1.1 - Policy for quality assurance	4-6	4	The standard aims to evaluate the implementation of an internal quality assurance process and a continuous improvement system, based on a self-assessment in which teachers, students and administrative staff participate. The standard also verifies awareness of scientific integrity and ethics (known and shared system for detecting plagiarism, fraud or corruption; formalized appeal procedures within the institution).
1.2 - Design and approval of programmes	1-1 1-2 3-1 3-2 3-3 4-2	1 2 3	The standard is designed to check that the objectives of the training programmes as well as the knowledge and skills to be acquired are coherent, explicit, displayed and known by the students and other stakeholders. It examines the architecture of the training programme according to the different professional projects to which it may lead and looks at the articulation of the training with its announced outlets (involvement of professionals, partnership agreements, work experience, internships and projects integrated into the training). The standard also verifies the methods of knowledge control and the fact that they are communicated and known by the students. In the European Higher Education

			Area, it looks at the allocation of ECTS credits in accordance with European directives.
1.3 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	3-1 3-3 3-4 3-6 3-7 4-2 4-3	2 3 4	The standard evaluates how the architecture of the training programme is built as well as the efficiency and relevance of the organisation of the courses in teaching units, in blocks of competences, as well as the teaching methods, if they are diversified (interdisciplinarity, innovation, serious games, active lecture hall, inverted pedagogy...), the scientific approach. The standard also examines the adaptation of the training programme to the different student audiences (lifelong learning, professional training, validation of prior experience and validation of higher education). It looks at how students with specific needs are accommodated (students with disabilities, high-level athletes, employees, etc.).
1.4 - Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	4-2 4-3 4-4	4	The standard assesses whether the recruitment process is clearly defined and non-discriminatory. It also evaluates the monitoring of the number of students in the programme, both quantitatively and qualitatively (basic initial training, continuing education, attractiveness of the programme, student flows (scholarship holders, international students, etc.), and the analysis made of this. It checks how the success of graduates is analysed, but also reorientations, and the reasons for the failure of non-graduates. It also checks the communication of results.
1.5 - Teaching staff	4-1 2-2	4 2	The standard verifies the participation of a qualified and diversified teaching team, adapted to the different contents of the training, trained in the acquisition of skills, associating external contributors from the socio-economic world, the list of which must be known.
1.6 - Learning resources and student support	3-6 3-5 3-1	3	The standard verifies the existence and evaluates the effectiveness of the facilities, resources and teaching methods available to the student: student adviser, individual monitoring, tutoring, gateways, quality of administrative and teaching resources (secretariat, rooms, libraries, computer rooms, etc.), digital resources (digital working environment, interactive teaching practices, adaptation to the needs of different audiences, etc.).
1.7 - Information management	4-4 4-5	4	The standard examines how the programme monitors and analyses its national and international student numbers and audiences, communicates on the success of its students, and knows and analyses the future of its graduates (in further study or professional integration).
1.8 - Public information	1-1 2-1	1	The standard checks that the programme publishes the list of its contributors, its learning objectives, the knowledge and skills to be acquired, the opportunities for further study and immediate professional integration. The standard examines whether the meetings of the steering team, the consultation bodies and the development council or similar bodies are the subject of specific and known communication. The standard looks at whether measures of student success are known to stakeholders and are published, as are surveys of graduates.
1.9 - Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes	4-6	4	The standard checks whether the programme has a regular internal evaluation system (self-evaluation) recognised by the institution and communicated to stakeholders. It also verifies its effectiveness.
1.10 - Cyclical external quality assurance	4-6	4	The standard looks at whether training is regularly and periodically evaluated in the country.

STANDARDS		K: Hcéres standard for the evaluation of a doctorate abroad - (ISCED level 8) L: Criteria for the accreditation of a doctorate abroad by Hcéres - (ISCED level 8)	
	K	L	
ESG PART 1	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Corresponding Hcéres standards	Further analysis
1.1 - Policy for quality assurance	4-3	4	The standard verifies the existence of procedures and indicators analysing the training activities of doctoral candidates. It checks whether the results of these self-assessments and the resulting changes are communicated to the various stakeholders, partners and doctoral students. The standard also verifies the implementation of awareness-raising and prevention measures against conflicts, discrimination, harassment and breaches of ethics or scientific integrity.
1.2 - Design and approval of programmes	1-1 1-2 3-2 4-1 4-2	1 3 4	The standard examines and evaluates how the doctoral training programme is designed to enhance the value of the doctorate and facilitate the doctor's career development both nationally and internationally. The standard verifies the architecture of doctoral training, the link with the institution's own or other institutions' research units, the adequacy of doctoral training to the profiles and expectations of doctoral students and the career paths they follow, and finally the evaluation of training by doctoral students.
1.3 - Student- centred learning, teaching and assessment	3-1 3-2 3-3	3 4	The standard verifies that there is a document defining the reciprocal commitments between doctoral students and thesis directors, that there is an individual follow-up adapted to the profile of each doctoral student, making it possible to follow the progress of their work, the preparation of their career, and the adaptation of material, financial and supervision conditions, as well as to prevent any form of conflict/discrimination. The standard looks at the involvement of doctoral students in the evaluation of their training and in the organisation and evaluation of scientific or professional events.
1.4 – Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	2-2 3-1 3-2 3-3	3 4	The standard verifies that the structure managing the doctorate has put in place precise rules for the recruitment of doctoral students, funding for the thesis, conditions for monitoring and supervising doctoral students (doctoral charter, training agreement, various mechanisms for individual monitoring of doctoral students), and for the management of the end of the thesis, juries, defence criteria and duration, etc. All these rules must be transparent for all stakeholders and adapted according to the profiles. The standard also verifies that doctoral students have access to training that enables them to develop transversal skills.
1.5 - Teaching staff	3-1 2-1	4 2	The standard evaluates whether there are rules for supervising doctoral students (supervision methods, management of co-directorships, supervision of particular profiles, etc.), and the effectiveness and evaluation of these rules. It also looks at the training of supervisors in terms of supervision, ethics and scientific integrity, the fight against discrimination and

			harassment, and more generally the relationship between research and society.
1.6 - Learning resources and student support	3-2 3-3 4-1 4-3	3	The standard verifies that the institution's structure managing the doctorate ensures that doctoral students have sufficient financial resources and appropriate working conditions. It verifies the adaptation of reception and integration measures to the various needs of doctoral students, and the policies for international openness. It also verifies the human, material and financial resources deployed and the implementation of the necessary measures to prevent conflicts, discrimination or harassment, and to limit situations likely to lead to abandonment.
1.7 - Information management	4-2 4-3	4	The standard verifies that the structure managing the doctoral student collects, analyses and communicates precise information on the teaching programmes that enable doctoral studies to be pursued, on the doctoral students' previous programmes and on the future of the doctoral students. It looks at the involvement of doctoral candidates/doctors in the creation of alumni networks, and analyses the implementation of effective cohort monitoring systems and their use to develop structures in terms of operation, supervision and training, and to strengthen the animation and promotion of the doctorate among partners.
1.8 - Public information	1-1	1	The standard verifies that the means of communication (internal and external) are functional and allow the dissemination of organisational and administrative procedures and decision validation circuits to the identified public; of the various research activities and scientific and/or professional development activities; and of the results and implications of self-evaluations. The standard verifies that the procedures adopted for the recruitment of doctoral students are accessible and explicit, as are the doctoral students' theses and work, as well as information concerning professional integration and access to alumni-type networks.
1.9 - Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes	2-1 4-2 4-3	4	The standard verifies that doctoral candidates take part in evaluations of the training and its programmes and that they have taken part in the self-evaluation of the training.
1.10 - Cyclical external quality assurance	4-3	4	The standard looks at whether training is regularly and periodically evaluated in the country.

10.2 – Analysis of the evaluation methodology for institutions, with reference to ESG 2.2 - ESG 2.7

ESG 2.2	Designing methodologies fit for purpose
<i>External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.</i>	
<p>The methodologies and evaluation standards are debated and approved by the Hcéres Board, whose analysis seeks to ensure that they fulfil the primary objective of helping the evaluated entities to continuously improve their practices, and providing the information about the running of institutions that is required by decision-makers and stakeholders, in compliance with the national legislative and regulatory framework. Upon completion of a group of evaluations, a feedback process is organised in the form of questionnaires sent out to the subjects of the evaluations and the experts involved.</p> <p>Methodological documents (expert handbook, evaluation standards, self-evaluation guide) are reviewed regularly, in the interests of continuous improvement and simplification, with reference to both the results of feedback exercises and changes to the national legislative and regulatory framework. For Universities, a first round of changes was finalised in 2017, with an institutional evaluation organised into five key dimensions for the effective running of an educational institution.</p> <p>To take account of the specific characteristics of each institution, and deliver the highest possible level of value added in terms of its recommendations, Hcéres asks institutions to transmit their expectations of the evaluation process. An experiment with universities is underway on gathering this information before they submit their self-evaluation reports, to enable them to tailor their responses in the report to the requirements of the evaluation standards, with reference to their own characteristics and interests, while also being certain of covering all of the points contained in the standards. Their expectations are collected in a document produced by Hcéres and passed on to the external evaluation committee at the same time as the self-evaluation report. The committee is required to consider these expectations in its report.</p> <p>During the 2016-2018 period, Hcéres held regular meetings with the Conference of University Presidents, in which the institutional evaluation methodology was discussed with the CPU's members, and the revised evaluation standards were presented to them. A joint CPU-Hcéres seminar was held on 14 March 2018, in which institutions were invited to take part. The aim of such initiatives is to share the culture of self-evaluation as broadly as possible with institutions.</p> <p>In the context of the evaluation of engineering schools, the specific missions of the Hcéres and the CTI are set out in the regulations in force. In its audits, the CTI gives a central place to engineering training programme and ensures that the resources allocated to them allow them to be well organised, that they are adapted to the current and future needs of the socio-economic world, and that they adopt skills-based approaches and continuous improvement procedures. The ultimate goal is the accreditation of training courses by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. The Hcéres examines the overall operation of the institution and checks the coherence of the resources it deploys to serve the strategy it has defined. The end result is the production of a report, which is a reference element for the State services in order to establish contracts with the institutions.</p> <p>This complementarity of their missions has led the Hcéres and the CTI to coordinate their evaluations. The main aim of this cooperation is to facilitate and simplify the involvement of institutions by requesting a single file, drawn up according to a jointly defined plan based on the two agencies' standards, and by carrying out a visit at a common time with shared interviews (see below).</p> <p>The LPR confers a new role of coordination of evaluation bodies in higher education on Hcéres. This new role will make it possible to go further in optimising evaluation arrangements, particularly with the CTI.</p>	
ESG 2.3	Implementing processes
<p><i>External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a self-assessment or equivalent; - an external assessment normally including a site visit; - a report resulting from the external assessment; - a consistent follow-up. 	
<p>External quality assurance procedures applicable to higher education institutions (universities and schools) are published on the Hcéres website and presented to institutions at the launch of each new evaluation campaign.</p> <p>https://www.hceres.fr/en/evaluation-institutions</p>	

The external evaluation of institutions is based on the self-evaluation report (SER) and on the follow-up to the recommendations contained in the most recent evaluation whose transmission is requested at the midway point in the cycle (around two years before the self-evaluation). The "Guidelines for Self-Evaluation" document sets out the goals and expectations of the self-evaluation process. It is followed by a list of documents required for the self-evaluation file: size of the SER, list of compulsory appendices (accounting documents, organisational chart, objectives and resources contract signed with the supervising ministry etc.).

The institution must also produce a strategy document setting out their key priorities for the coming contract period.

In response to a point raised in the most recent ENQA evaluation report, new instructions have been drawn up for universities on the production of self-evaluation reports, including the obligation to address each standard individually.

On a related note, the evaluation reports produced by universities must now conform to the organisational structure imposed by the chapters and reference numbers of the evaluation standards; the report must provide an evaluative judgement and recommendations for each standard, and identify the evaluation factors corresponding to the institution's expectations.

Throughout the evaluation process, the panels of experts are accompanied by both a scientific advisor and a project manager, responsible for the methodology implemented and the respect of deadlines, equipped with clearly documented internal Quality procedures ("the guide") for each evaluation procedure.

Before the visit, the panel of experts analyses the SER and produces a diagnosis of the situation, following the organisational structure defined by the evaluation standard. This process should yield the first batch of assessments which are more than just questions, along with key questions which may subsequently define the structure of the interview forms to be used during the on-site visit. For engineering schools, Hcéres visits are coordinated with those of the CTI (see above).

On-site visits have four main objectives:

- To analyse the issues identified in advance by the panel in greater detail, and thus confirm or refute the hypotheses formulated during the preliminary analysis.
- To gather additional information not found in the self-evaluation file, with particular regard to the expectations expressed by the institution and, where relevant, referring to the document reporting on the follow-up of recommendations after two years.
- To assess the extent to which the various internal and external stakeholders have appropriated the research institution's policies and self-evaluation activities.
- To finalise the main assessments and recommendations that will form the backbone of the external evaluation report.

The report should either confirm or contradict the self-evaluation judgements expressed by the institution in the SER. The report should reach a conclusion regarding the quality of the self-evaluation process adopted by the institution, consider the progress made since the most recent evaluation, and assess the feasibility of its plans for the future.

With regard to follow-up measures, Hcéres has taken account of this observation by asking, since 2018, all universities evaluated in Group B 2015-2016 to submit a report explaining how they have integrated each recommendation. The reports submitted are analysed by the Hcéres team and attached to the file passed on to the panel responsible for the next evaluation of the university in question, whose report must include an assessment of the extent to which the recommendations have been followed.

ESG 2.4

Peer-review experts

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s)

Institutional evaluation panels have seven members, on average, including a chair, but some panels may have five to twelve members depending on the complexity of the institution in question. They are proposed by the Scientific Advisor mainly from the experts' pool. The selection of experts takes into account the specificities of the institution (scientific disciplines, institutional missions, geographical location, conclusions of the previous evaluation and follow-up on recommendations after two years, etc.). Each panel should comprise a majority of academic experts and at least one administrative expert, one student expert (a current student or a graduate whose most recent qualification was obtained within the last two years), an expert from the socio-economic sector or non-academic cultural sector (but who nonetheless has experience of dealing with the academic sector), and an expert who is currently or has been very recently employed outside France.

Experts are selected on the basis of their profiles and competencies according to the requirements of the evaluation, which focuses on the management and strategy of institutions. For academic experts, previous experience involving significant managerial/governance responsibility in the field of higher education and/or research (presidency, senior management role, vice-presidency etc.) is preferable. Similarly, student members must have direct experience of involvement in the running of an institution (membership of an advisory board) and/or experience with a student association (president of the students' union etc.). Administrative experts must have occupied a senior management position in higher education and research, and/or in a public or private higher education or research institution (DGS, DGSA, SG, SGA, CROUS Director etc.).

Every member of the panel of experts must be approved by the head of department, after the process designed to detect conflicts of interest, which includes the submission of the list of proposed experts to the evaluated entity. In the interests of transparency, the CVs of experts are published on the Hcéres website, and their names are listed in the Evaluation Report.

All experts are invited to attend a training session. This training is followed by a refresher session on the evaluation methodology during the panel's first meeting prior to its visit (the preparatory meeting).

The constitution of expert committees faces three difficulties:

- the recruitment of experts from the socio-economic world who, due to a lack of time, do not always wish to participate in evaluation missions;
- the recruitment of international experts, as the criterion of French-speaking countries limits the possibilities;
- the recruitment of student experts, as this type of expert is, by its very nature, subject to rapid obsolescence.

In the future, targeted communication campaigns aimed at these three types of experts would perhaps make it possible to overcome the difficulties of identification and recruitment.

ESG 2.5

Criteria for outcomes

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

The institutional evaluation standards have been developed on the basis of five key dimensions – institutional positioning, institutional strategy, organisation, governance and management – that provide a global model for the running of a higher education institution or group of institutions. A precise definition of these 5 notions is presented in the introduction to the evaluation standards, which clearly set out the principles underpinning Hcéres' evaluations, focusing on institutional analysis and, more specifically, on the central components of institutional management as reflections of the construction and operational deployment of the institution's strategy. On this basis, institutions must demonstrate the effectiveness of their actions, in light of their stated ambitions and objectives.

The elements used for evaluations are systematically published long before the beginning of each new campaign, and the evaluation standards are presented in detail to the evaluated entities at the kick-off meeting for each evaluation campaign.

Detailed criteria explain how the requirements of the standard should be addressed in the self-evaluation report. Without being either exclusive or exhaustive, these criteria enable the experts to assess the extent to which the institution has engaged with the expectations enshrined in the evaluation standards.

No a priori ranking of the criteria is imposed in order to maintain the ability to adapt the standard to the highly diverse range of institutional organisational systems.

The results of external evaluations are presented in reports, divided into chapters according to an overarching structure which ensures the comprehensive coverage of all evaluation standards. These reports contain precise, non-prescriptive judgements and recommendations, the most important of which are reiterated in the conclusion (strengths and weaknesses of the institution and principal recommendations of the evaluation). In accordance with the autonomy of the institutions, these recommendations are not prescriptive and Hcéres is not directly involved in decision-making.

ESG 2.6

Reporting

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

Reports are published in their entirety on the Hcéres website⁴⁸, along with letters of observations from the evaluated institutions.

⁴⁸ https://www.hceres.fr/en/rechercher-une-publication?key=&f%5B0%5D=themes_publications%3A43

To facilitate the exploitation of the report by the institution and stakeholders (supervising ministries, partners, the academic community, the press etc.), special attention is paid to its format, which must be concise and written in a simple, clear and precise style.

Reports incorporate material from the reference documents and are based upon objective, verifiable, cross-referenced data, provided by the institution and/or taken from publicly available sources as well as interviews conducted as part of the on-site visit.

The joint consultation phase provides an initial opportunity to correct any factual errors, misunderstandings, omissions, inappropriate formulations, unfounded assertions or even statements liable to pose clear competitive or even legal risks to the institution (cf. description of the institutional evaluation process).

The panel of experts will consider this feedback, choosing whether or not to take it into account, before producing the definitive version of the report. Subsequently, the institution is given the opportunity to respond to the content of the report, in a letter that will be appended to the report.

Hcéres makes sure that the content of the report is evaluative, not descriptive.

Reports are structured as follows:

- An introduction, containing a purely descriptive section which surveys the territory in which the institution is based (this section is the same for all institutions belonging to the same territorial cluster), key information about the institution (HR, budget, legal status, organisation etc.), and a reminder of the principal recommendations made in the most recent evaluation and the expectations of the institution with regard to this evaluation.
- The body of the report, which generally follows a certain order: an evaluative judgement which may be followed by a number of recommendations; a substantiated analysis accompanied by a description and contextualisation of the activity in question, with systematic reference to the formal information and formal evidence derived from the self-evaluation report and the on-site visit. The expectations expressed by the institution with regard to the evaluation are covered in the relevant standards or, if they are cross-cutting expectations, before the conclusion of the report. If any of these expectations cannot be met because the necessary information is missing from the SER or during the visit, the panel will specify that they were unable to provide a satisfactory response. The steps taken to follow up on recommendations after two years are also covered by the relevant standards, and also by the standard specifically addressing Quality processes.
- The conclusion of the report is a summary analysing the institution's strategy, its implementation and its trajectory, as well as the major issues facing the institution, now and in the future, placed in their proper context. The conclusion summarises the institution's main strengths and weaknesses in a handful of brief statements, ranked by order of importance and consistent with the content of the report. It also includes recommendations on issues of clear strategic significance, which are ranked by order of importance and addressed specifically to the institution. These recommendations should tie in with elements of the future strategy proposed by the institution. A follow-up check on the implementation of these recommendations will be conducted two years after publication of the report (cf. description of the institutional evaluation process).

The composition of the panel of experts is described at the end of the report (experts' names and professional statuses).

Each report is signed by the chair of the panel of experts, attesting to the independence of its judgements, and by the President of Hcéres, attesting to its compliance with the principles of effective evaluation.

ESG 2.7

Complaints and appeals

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

The joint structure for all Hcéres activities was confirmed in its role by the new board in March 2021. The structure in question is the Appeals commission, with its permanent secretariat.

The term "appeal" is used to refer to all measures taken with a view to securing the withdrawal, cancellation or modification of a report or decision⁴⁹ originating from Hcéres. A claim is any expression of dissatisfaction regarding Hcéres' activities. Complaints are handled directly by the President of Hcéres.

The Appeals commission has the authority to handle all claims relating to:

- The conduct or results of an evaluation carried out in France or elsewhere (e.g. conflict or coincidence of interest, doubts about the competency of experts, disrespectful behaviour, disputes relating to the conclusions reached by experts etc.).

⁴⁹ Hcéres only takes decision for evaluations conducted abroad, related to the accreditation process by the Hcéres International Accreditation Commission.

- Decisions made by the accreditation commission internationally (e.g. appeals against decisions or refusals to grant accreditation on the basis of information contained in evaluation reports, disputes relating to the duration of accreditations).
- Decisions to approve the evaluation procedures put in place by other bodies (e.g. appeals against refusals to accredit the evaluation procedures put in place by other bodies).

All claims relating to decisions taken by government ministries on the basis of Hcéres evaluations are passed on to the ministry in question.

Acting on the recommendation made in the external evaluation conducted in 2016, Hcéres has decided that commissions should include a qualified expert not attached to Hcéres. The person in question is a representative of the Conference of University Presidents (CPU).

The rules of procedure and the composition of the Appeals Commission are published on the Hcéres website⁵⁰.

Since the external evaluation of 2016, Hcéres has not received any appeals nor complaints.

10.3 – Analysis of the evaluation methodology for programmes and doctoral schools, with reference to ESG 2.2 - ESG 2.7

ESG 2.2	Designing methodologies fit for purpose
	<p>To ensure that it is fit for purpose, Hcéres' evaluation process has been devised with reference to the regulatory framework and with the involvement of higher education institutions (e.g. informal consultation, consultation of panels, working meetings, surveys and feedback, opinions and suggestions on the documents, criteria and indicators to be filled in by the institutions during the self-evaluation). It covers an array of topics which must be addressed during the self-evaluation process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For university programmes leading to bachelor's or master's degrees, five points covering all these standards and measurable facts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o the outcome of the programme; o its positioning in the environment; o its pedagogical organisational structure; o its management; o its quality assurance mechanisms. - For doctoral schools, three areas of operational quality management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The school's operational and scientific affiliations; o Supervision and training of doctoral students. o Monitoring of PhDs' career paths. <p>This combination of quality standards or objectives and measurable facts enables institutions to develop their own evaluation standards for their study programmes.</p> <p>The methodologies and standards are debated and approved by the Hcéres Board, whose analysis seeks to ensure that they fulfil the primary objective of assisting the evaluated entities with the continuous improvement of their practices, while keeping decision-makers and stakeholders informed about the running of institutions, in compliance with the national legislative and regulatory framework applicable to Hcéres.</p>
ESG 2.3	Implementing processes
	<p>External quality assurance procedures applicable to study programmes and doctoral schools are published on the Hcéres website and presented to institutions at the launch of each new evaluation campaign. https://www.hceres.fr/en/evaluation-study-programmes-doctoral-schools-and-doctoral-colleges</p> <p>The self-evaluation files produced by institutions, including documentary evidence, must also include interviews conducted during site visits, and culminate in the drafting of evaluation reports.</p> <p>An evaluation report is produced for each evaluated entity, and published on the Hcéres portal.</p> <p>Panels of experts have access to the evaluation reports from previous evaluation rounds, which enables them to verify the implementation of the recommendations made therein.</p> <p>The Hcéres database, known as the EDM (electronic document management) system, is an essential evaluation support tool, facilitating interaction between Hcéres, the institutions and experts.</p>

⁵⁰ <https://www.hceres.fr/en/stakeholders>

During the Group B evaluations, the Department of Academic Programme Evaluation gathered sufficient information from institutions regarding undergraduate study programmes to form the basis of a database. This initiative should soon be extended to master's programmes in Group C, bolstered by the creation of a digital data collection platform.

ESG 2.4

Peer-review experts

The experts involved in evaluations are approved by heads of department at the recommendation of scientific advisors, drawn from the Hcéres pool of experts or from networks providing the expertise required for a given evaluation (vice-presidents for training, "New university curricula" etc.) The turnover of experts is around 30% per campaign.

For each new round of evaluations, experts take part in face-to-face or remote training sessions, and may also receive other forms of support for their missions, such as training manuals, tutorials or guidance from supporting administrative/scientific personnel

During the recruitment process, the independence of experts is verified, and all experts sign the Evaluation Charter along with a confidentiality agreement. The institution under evaluation is informed of the composition of the panel.

Panels generally comprise six experts, including several academic experts, one expert from civil society or business, and one doctoral student or recent PhD.

ESG 2.5

Criteria for outcomes

When forming an opinion about a specific study programme, doctoral school or college, the standards (quality objectives defined in Hcéres evaluation standards) provide the experts with pertinent benchmarks to inform their opinions on the quality objective in question.

When forming an opinion about the policy of an institution with regard to the national regulations, as is the case for undergraduate programme offerings, specific aspects of the regulations are taken into consideration.

In both cases, the relevant information is included in the self-evaluation file.

Furthermore, within the framework of the French accreditation system, the panel of experts issues an opinion regarding the "project" developed by the institution for its next five-year plan, with a view to securing accreditation from the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

ESG 2.6

Reporting

Hcéres' evaluation reports are presented into two distinct pieces "results" and "plan", which are presented separately for bachelor's- and master's-degree-level programme offerings, and combined in a single report for evaluations of doctoral schools and colleges. They contain an overview of the evaluation procedure, a description of the context, an analysis of the institution's situation, its strengths and its weaknesses, a number of recommendations and points to be monitored, and an "accreditation opinion" for each programme in the "draft" report for all evaluations other than for doctoral programmes.

The report is drafted by the panel and collectively approved at a meeting, before being transmitted to the institution, which can flag up any factual errors and submit observations. The Hcéres report, along with the observations added by the institution, is signed by both the chair of the panel of experts and the President of Hcéres, and then published on the High Council's portal where it can be consulted by the general public. At the same time, the final report (Hcéres report plus the observations made by the institution) is transmitted to the supervising ministries.

A summary of the evaluation reports on study programmes offered by an institution may include a more general report on that institution, accompanied by chapters on governance and research.

ESG 2.7

Complaints and appeals

The evaluation procedures for doctoral training programmes, schools and colleges are covered by a joint system at Hcéres, described in the institutional evaluation methodology.

10.4 – Analysis of the international evaluation methodology with reference to ESG 2.2 - ESG 2.7

ESG 2.2	Designing methodologies fit for purpose
	<p>The methodology and standards used by Hcéres to evaluate international institutions and study programmes in the field of higher education and research are compatible with the ESG. They are derived not only from Hcéres' experience of evaluating institutions and study programmes in France, but are also informed by the best practices of other European agencies.</p> <p>Upstream of the "evaluation procedure" itself, contact is made with the national evaluation agency for the country in question, where relevant, in order to inform it and potentially involve it in the Hcéres procedure. Discussions with France's diplomatic representatives in the country in question also enable the gathering of as much information as possible on the context of the request, and about the institution itself.</p> <p>The preparatory phase for evaluations requires constant dialogue between the DEI and the evaluated entity (video conferences, preparatory work on-site or remotely). It is essential to ensure that stakeholders share the same objectives and a mutual understanding of the key issues concerning the evaluation. The preparatory mission fosters a greater mutual understanding between Hcéres and the evaluated entity. This facilitates the self-evaluation process for the institution, and simplifies Hcéres' preparations for the evaluation process. Discussions help to clarify the schedule, financial cost and human resources required for the operation. Technical specifications (terms of reference, conventions, approvals) are drawn up and signed by the parties. A detailed support guide is issued to each evaluated entity.</p> <p>The evaluated entity is asked to compile its own self-evaluation file, following the recommendations set out below.</p> <p>The self-evaluation file must always contain the five following items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A document from the institution requesting the evaluation or accreditation, providing details of the institution's general strategy and the reasons for the request; this document may also set out the specific points that the institution would like the panel of experts to consider. 2. A detailed descriptive presentation of the institution (cf. Appendix 2): 3. A self-evaluation report, which must <u>closely adhere to the six main categories of the external evaluation standards</u> and the associated points of reference. It must be no longer than <u>60 pages for an institution or 30 pages for a training programme</u>. <p>Additional documents can be attached as appendices to the SER. These appendices (key figures and information relevant to the running of the institution) serve as supporting documents for the self-evaluation process. They are cited with footnotes in the self-evaluation report, to make the report easier to read.</p> <p>The SER begins with a description of the self-evaluation process.</p> <p>In the SER, the evaluated entity must clearly explain its specificities in order to facilitate the preparations of the panel of experts ahead of the visit. Evaluated entities are therefore advised to flag up subjects that are of particular importance to them, but which are not included in the fields covered by the evaluation standards.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The file should also contain four or six SWOT analyses corresponding to each of the four or six fields in the relevant standards for the evaluation of study programmes or institutions, which identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to the functioning of the institution in the field in question. 5. The SER should be followed by a number of appendices, listed below. Statistical data concerning developments since the most recent evaluation should be presented <u>for the past four years</u>, in order to highlight the progress made by the institution.
ESG 2.3	Implementing processes
	<p>When applied to a university institution or study programme, the evaluation process consists in analysing the major functions corresponding to the evaluated institution's missions within its different fields of activity, with reference to an external evaluation standard. In particular, past results and progress will be examined with reference to the objectives set out in the strategy for the study programme or institution (since its creation or most recent evaluation).</p> <p>The evaluation procedure itself comprises four stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An exploratory mission including an on- site visit by a Hcéres project team. This initial face-to-face contact between Hcéres and the institution (or remote contact if required by health or safety restrictions) is important. It enables Hcéres to determine the expectations of the institution or for the study programme, and better understand its specificities. Hcéres also presents its evaluation philosophy and methodology to the institution. On this occasion, members of the evaluation team

may inform the institution or training programme that, in their opinion, they are not yet ready to embark upon the accreditation process.

2. A **self-evaluation phase**, conducted by the institution itself prior to the evaluation. The evaluated entity will be given precise details about the self-evaluation file to be submitted to Hcéres, and a characterisation form must be provided. This phase brings together all of the information required for the independent experts to conduct their evaluation, and provides evidence of the quality of the institution or programme.
3. An **external evaluation phase** conducted by a panel of experts in a collegial manner, including an on-site visit, and culminating in the publication of an evaluation report. The on-site visit conducted by the panel of experts lasts for two to three days. The details of the visit, including the choice of site, will be decided during the consultations between Hcéres and the institution, leaving sufficient time for both parties to organise themselves accordingly. The schedule for this visit will include interviews with persons occupying management and governance roles within the institution, along with panels representing students, teaching staff and administrative and technical staff. Interviews will also be held with the most important partners (professional, scientific etc.) involved with the institution, or which employ students immediately after they graduate from the institution. Interviews with non-local participants may be conducted by video-conference. There is no official reporting session to the senior management of the institution at the end of the visit. The final meeting between the experts and the senior management of the institution simply serves to clarify any points still in doubt at the end of the visit.

Drafting of the evaluation report.

Throughout the process, Hcéres' two-person project team acts as the point of contact for both the evaluated entity and the experts, in order to ensure that the evaluation runs smoothly and conforms to ethical principles.

Hcéres systematically contacts the national authorities of the country of the entity being evaluated. If the institution or the national authorities so request, an evaluation including staff and experts from both countries may be organised. In this case, a common standard is drawn up in collaboration with the agency involved and is communicated to the institution and to all stakeholders. Preparatory work is therefore carried out between the two agencies prior to the evaluation to define an appropriate methodology and communicate it to the parties.

The evaluation process abroad is described on the Hcéres website:

<https://www.hceres.fr/en/evaluation-and-accreditation-abroad>

ESG 2.4

Peer-review experts

Hcéres selects a panel of between four and eight experts, including one student, who are selected according to the specificities of the evaluated entity. All experts are carefully chosen, and their skills and expertise correspond to the evaluated entity's specificities, as determined by the Hcéres team in charge of the evaluation.

Most of the experts are academics who have previously occupied positions of responsibility within their institutions, either in terms of governance or as programme directors. Their academic profile must match the disciplinary focus of the evaluated entity. Academic experience in another country, or experience of managing an international project, is appreciated. Some of the experts speak the local language. The panel members will thus have a complementary range of backgrounds and experience, giving them a detailed understanding of the evaluated entity's specificities.

The composition of the panel of experts must also meet certain specific national requirements. The composition of the panel and the experts' CVs of the experts are presented to the institution for review, in order to avoid any conflicts of interest. Before the mission begins, each expert must sign declarations of commitment and confidentiality.

If the evaluation request requires two or more agencies to work together, the panel may be selected to ensure equal representation. Ultimately, the panel must be approved by all participating agencies, of course, but one of them shall be designated as the "coordinating agency."

At the start of the visit and the interview process, the Hcéres team reminds the entire panel of the strict ethical rules applicable to interviews. For example: during interviews, no references may be made to the content of other interviews. No positive or negative judgements should be expressed during interviews, nor should experts make any personal references, etc. Interviews conducted during remote visits must not be recorded.

ESG 2.5	Criteria for outcomes
<p>The evaluation process is guided by one essential tool: the External Evaluation Standard. This document ensures that Hcéres, the institution and the panel of experts all use a common language.</p> <p>These standards are divided into several fields representing, at the institutional level, the major sectors of activity corresponding to the core missions of higher education, along with the institution's strategy and governance, operational management and, for study programmes, their purpose, positioning, educational organisation and management.</p> <p>Fields are divided into areas of activity which define the main subjects to be covered by the evaluation. These fields define the scope of the evaluation to be conducted upstream by the institution (self-evaluation phase), and downstream by the panel of experts (external evaluation phase). The fields also form the backbone of the final accreditation criteria.</p> <p>Within each field, a series of standards define the values and/or objectives applicable to institutions, within a given context, with reference to their missions and their stakeholders' expectations.</p> <p>The panel of experts also assess the capacity of the institution or training programme to meet the expectations enshrined in these references.</p> <p>The evaluation standard corresponds to the quality standards and criteria imposed by Hcéres. Nevertheless, outside these fundamental areas, evaluated entities are entitled to request the evaluation of additional aspects, as long as they are clearly connected to the national legal requirements. This would apply to a request for evaluation for accreditation purposes made by an international agency with regard to a qualification issued within its territory, for example.</p> <p>If multiple evaluation and/or accreditation agencies are involved, they must first develop a shared evaluation standard.</p> <p>In the case of accreditation, the agreement explicitly states this and describes the methodology used.</p> <p>The experts' evaluation report concludes with an accreditation statement, drawn up on the basis of the evaluation carried out in accordance with the Hcéres accreditation criteria. This opinion is sent to the Hcéres permanent accreditation commission. This commission analyses the experts' statement, studies the accreditation criteria and takes a decision. The accreditation decision taken by the accreditation commission is sent to the evaluated entity and may be appealed. The entire procedure is defined, sent to the evaluated entity as soon as the agreement is concluded and made available on the Hcéres website.</p>	
ESG 2.6	Reporting
<p>Following the on-site visit, the chair of the panel of experts submits an evaluation report written jointly by the panel and summarising their judgements, accompanied by clear supporting references (SER, all documents produced by the evaluated entity, any consistent information gathered from different interviews, standard report template completed by the department etc.) and concluding with the strengths, weaknesses and a series of recommendations for the institution.</p> <p>The department's in-house editorial committee checks that the report complies with Hcéres' quality standards, without altering its content.</p> <p>This draft report is sent to the evaluated entity, which is invited to correct any factual errors. Its responses are analysed by the chair of the panel, with support from the experts and the project team, and taken into consideration. This joint consultation phase culminates in the production of the final evaluation report, which is published on the Hcéres website, along with the official observation submitted by the evaluated entity and, where relevant, the final accreditation decision. Institutional evaluation reports written in foreign languages are also published in French.</p>	
ESG 2.7	Complaints and appeals
<p>International evaluation and accreditation procedures are covered by Hcéres' joint system described in the institutional evaluation methodology and have not been the subject of any complaint or appeal.</p>	

10.5 – Adaptation of methodologies in response to the COVID-19 crisis

Due to the exceptional circumstances imposed by the present public health crisis (COVID-19), a specially **adapted evaluation procedure** has been put in place, subject to approval by Hcéres, the panel and the institution.

It enables the on-site inspection of an institution to be replaced by an online visit conducted by video-conference. This procedure conforms to the fundamental principles of the evaluation, and is implemented in the following situations:

- Government-imposed bans on national or regional travel, closures of hotels and restaurants, closures of institutions and any other measures making it impossible or highly difficult for the panel of experts to travel and stay on site;
- Travel restrictions affecting the chair of the panel (border closures, person-at-risk status etc.);
- Travel restrictions affecting at least 50% of the panel members.

With these circumstances in mind, Hcéres has invested in almost 250 licences for a video-conferencing platform, which enables all of the necessary meetings to be held, sometimes simultaneously.

As for the conventional visit procedure, the objectives of the visit are based on:

- Investigative work to confirm or inform the results of the self-evaluation;
- Gathering additional, reliable and up-to-date information through interviews;
- The importance of briefings and debriefings for sharing analyses on the subject of the evaluation;
- The formulation of clear conclusions: strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations.

To this end, on 2 December 2020, Hcéres published a charter⁵¹ focusing on this type of evaluation, adding specific provisions for online visit to the existing Evaluation Charter. This charter is sent to the evaluated entities and the experts.

11. INFORMATION AND OPINIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS

11.1. Organisation of feedback

Feedback is an integral component of the annual activity cycle for evaluation departments. In 2018, in the interest of cost control, Hcéres replaced its Sphinx software with Lime Survey, following a successful test.

Each department is responsible for organising feedback. To facilitate the sharing of best practices, a cross-disciplinary group led by the IT Department and the head of Quality has been working with the departments to harmonise their practices and share best practices and results. A dedicated space has been created on the Hcéres servers. A guide to conducting and processing surveys has been drawn up by the IT Department on the basis of these initial experiments.

Each department defines the scope of its surveys. However, the following items appear in all surveys: the utility of the evaluation, the documentation and evaluation standard used, the conduct of the evaluation and visit, the composition of the expert panel, the evaluation report and its publication.

The stakeholders consulted for these surveys are:

	Stakeholders consulted
Evaluation of institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Heads of institutions- experts
Evaluation of study programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vice-presidents responsible for programmes at the evaluated institutions- Chairs of panels- Experts- Scientific advisors
Evaluation of doctoral schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Senior management teams of doctoral schools- experts

⁵¹ Evaluation charter for online visit, provided as Annex D

The results of these surveys are presented in a note, and taken into account in the reviews of methodologies.

The supervising ministries, as key stakeholders, are consulted via individual meetings and discussions.

11.2. Example of a feedback process

The analytical note on the feedback received from the vice-presidents responsible for study programmes at the institutions evaluated in Group A 2019-2020, concerning the evaluation of undergraduate and master's-degree-level programmes, is provided here as an illustration of this process.

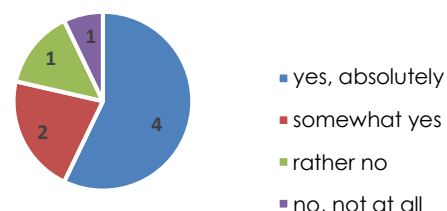
In hindsight, the survey appears to have been only partially successful. Eight of the 13 vice-presidents in charge of study programmes contacted answered some or all of the questions (five did not respond).

Responses to questions

- Evaluation process – results and plan

The VPs in charge of programmes were largely satisfied with the evaluation process put in place by Hcéres. The majority of respondents (6 out of 8) appreciated the information provided during the evaluation kick-off meeting and considered that it met their expectations; the information and documents provided allowed them to fine-tune their self-evaluation file and their “plan” documentation.

Do you think that the information and documents given at the kick-off meeting were adapted to your expectations?

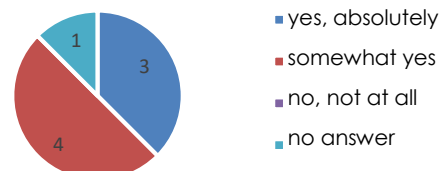


- Evaluation of programmes

Generally speaking, the VPs in charge of programme considered that the range of topics evaluated by Hcéres were appropriate in terms of evaluating the study programmes proposed by their institutions.

For the rest of the questionnaire, only seven VPs responded.

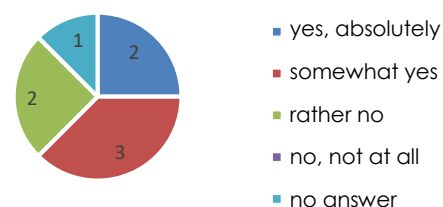
Do you think that the criterion on educational organisation was relevant?



According to the respondents' feedback, “educational organisation” was a primary evaluation criterion.

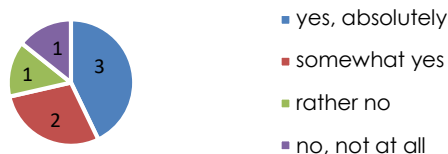
With one exception, all of the VPs in charge of programmes agreed that “scientific objectives,” “positioning in the academic environment,” “headcount,” “job-market integration,” “role of research, professionalisation and internships,” “support for success,” “acquisition of knowledge and competencies” and “creation of an advisory board” were satisfactory criteria for analysing study programmes.

Do you think that the criterion on the teaching team was relevant?



However, the VPs expressed more contrasting views on the impact of other criteria, including “teaching teams,” “international dimension,” “incoming and outgoing links with other pathways,” “educational methods” and “evaluation of teachers by students.”

Do you think that the criterion on the evaluation of teachers by students was relevant?



Four VPs in charge of programmes were also sceptical about the pertinence of the “digital technology” criterion.

It is encouraging to note that the majority of respondents (6 out of 8) reported having implemented evaluation processes within their institutions, while 5 had wholly or partially used Hcéres' evaluation criteria and documents to conduct their own self-evaluation.

- Fields of programmes

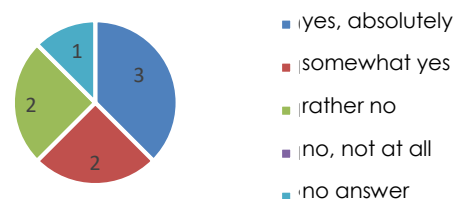
Reactions to the fields of study programmes remained mixed. Almost half of VPs in charge of programmes failed to see the value of this concept, proposed by Hcéres. Only 3 responded positively, and only 2 of these felt that the documents required for evaluation of fields were pertinent to the evaluation of their range of study programmes.

- The “results” Evaluation Report

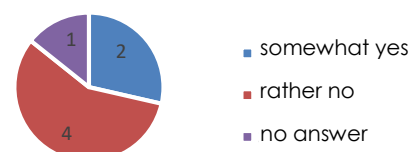
There was near-unanimous agreement that the “results” report (Ex Post) on drawn up by Hcéres' experts had helped to improve the range of programmes offered by the institutions evaluated. Seven respondents indicated that they considered this analysis to be pertinent, and that the points for attention flagged up for certain study programmes were justified.

Nonetheless, there were somewhat varied responses to the recommendations made in the reports. Two respondents considered that they were not pertinent.

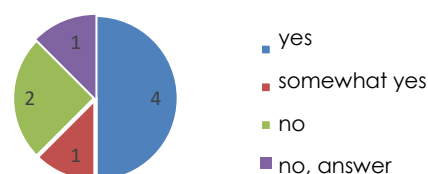
Do you think that the evaluation criterion on teaching methods was relevant?



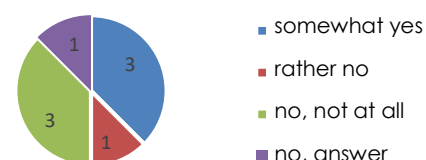
Do you think that the criterion on digital technology was relevant?



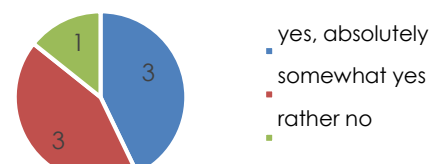
Did you use the Hcéres documents and the evaluation standards?



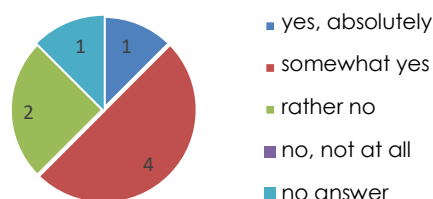
Did you find the concept of “fields of programmes” relevant for presenting your training offer?



Have the “results” reports helped you to develop your training offer?



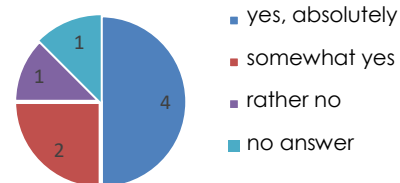
Did you find the recommendations in the “results” reports relevant?



- The "Plan" Evaluation Report

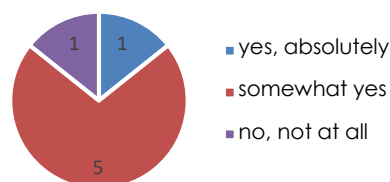
The VPs in charge of programmes were also asked about the "plan" Evaluation Report (*Ex Ante*), and with one exception, they all reported that producing this "plan" report for Hcéres had enabled them to re-examine the range of programmes offered by their institutions. The same applied to the "management of study programmes" and "educational organisation criteria."

Did you find the recommendations on the management and pedagogical organisation of the training offer constructive?



Furthermore, the opinions expressed by Hcéres with regard to study programmes were considered to be pertinent by 6 of the 7 VPs.

Opinions on the study programmes

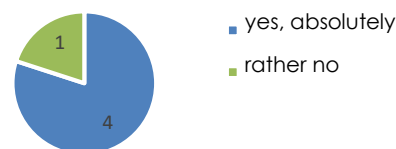


- The visit

Only 5 respondents answered the questions relating to on-site visits; 4 indicated that they had enjoyed their interactions with the panel of experts. They also expressed their satisfaction with regard to the format of the visit.

However, 2 out of the 5 expressed dissatisfaction about the duration of the discussions.

Did you find the exchanges between the Committee and the Presidency instructive?



Conclusion

The feedback from the VPs for Training in Group A is broadly satisfactory, despite the fact that only 7 respondents answered all of the questions. The responses to this questionnaire enable us to envisage improvements to the evaluations, and also to the questionnaire itself.

- Evaluation of study programmes

As a whole, the evaluation process proposed by Hcéres was positively received, despite the fact that presenting the range of study programmes as the "field of study programmes" was not appreciated by the institutions.

On this specific point, the department could envisage devoting more time to question-and-answer sessions on the evaluation process, particularly when planning the evaluation processes and standards for the next group of evaluations, and during kick-off meetings in order to provide institutions with clear information about the expectations.

Hcéres is also considering abandoning its plans to organise the evaluation of master's-degree-level programmes as a field of study programmes in its own right.

- Questionnaire

Feedback should become an integral part of the Hcéres evaluation process, and institutions should be notified thereof in order to inform vice-presidents that they will be receiving this survey.

Another point of particular importance is the need to reduce the delay between the transmission of evaluation reports to institutions and the transmission of the corresponding questionnaire, so that the evaluation process remains fresh in the respondents' minds.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MAINS FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS REVIEW AND AGENCY'S RESULTAING FOLLOW-UP

ESG 2.1

Recommendation from 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 entire study programme evaluation process has been completely revised since the complete implementation of accreditation in France. In the meantime, the revamping of undergraduate study programmes has placed a renewed focus on the role of internal quality assurance within institutions, in line with Part 1 of the ESG.

Regarding the professional development of teaching staff, the Hcéres standards take account of the fact that the universities have limited room for manoeuvre given the specific status of teaching staff in French higher education (the careers of university teaching and research staff are monitored by the CNU), as defined by the applicable regulations. However, the institutional evaluation standards contain references to the training strategy for institutional employees, and to the training and support policy in place for teaching staff.

Recommendation from 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.

The feedback obtained for Hcéres serves to ensure that the structure of the evaluation standards – organised into fields, with explicit standards accompanied by criteria – is understood and adopted by both institutions and experts. The annual quality cycle put in place by Hcéres enables improvements to the wording of standards, when necessary, without altering their substance.

Recommendation from the panel

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

Regarding the CBHE Toolkit on quality assurance for agencies and higher education institutions, Hcéres wishes to point out that it is one of the main authors of this document, and that the evaluations it carries out take into account its recommendations.

As for the European approach adopted in Yerevan,⁵² its implementation is more complex as it requires close collaboration with the evaluation authorities and agencies in the countries involved. Given the diverse quality assurance systems implemented in European countries (ex-ante systems, ex-post systems, institutional evaluations, study programme evaluations, accreditation, etc.), a considerable amount of preparatory work on cooperation is required, and this does not depend solely on Hcéres. However, Hcéres is fully prepared to cooperate with organisations that wish to move forward in this process.

ESG 2.2

Recommendation from 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 gained legitimacy and recognition among French actors in higher education and research by cooperating with them in a manner that is compatible with the requirements relating to its independence and the need to work intelligently with the stakeholders in evaluation. The stakeholders are all represented on the Hcéres Board, whose main responsibility is to contribute to the development of methodologies and standards and to approve them.

⁵² European approach to the quality assurance of joint programmes adopted by ministers at the Bologna Follow-Up Conference for Ministers held in Yerevan in 2015

Regarding the evaluations, the institutional evaluation panels systematically include one representative of the socio-professional sector and one student representative. The programme evaluation panels systematically include one student representative, and whenever the study programmes have a professional dimension, one representative of the socio-professional sector.

On a more operational note, the Hcéres teams include scientific advisors seconded by their universities, schools or research bodies in the French higher education and research system. By joining Hcéres, even for a limited proportion of their working time, they undertake to uphold its values and take part in its activities. In this capacity, they participate fully in the work on revising methodologies and standards, and even in the development of new activities.

During the development process by the department concerned, these activities always include consultations with stakeholders (e.g. the Conference of University Presidents (CPU) representing the universities).

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

Dialogue on institutional evaluation has been established with the CTI, with a view to simplifying the process of evaluating engineering schools, whose degrees are evaluated by the CTI. This dialogue has led to the implementation of a coordinated process involving both agencies. Hcéres has also engaged in the same process with the CEFDG and CCN-IUT in order to harmonise practices and lay the foundations for greater coordination of national evaluation bodies.

We believe that at present, the systematic involvement of external stakeholders in in-house activities as members of working groups is neither relevant nor necessary for compliance with ESG standard 2.2, as Hcéres has established open relationships with its environment, based on dialogue and transparency, as well as the Hcéres/CPU (Conference of University Presidents) standing collaborative working group on the evaluation of institutions.

ESG 2.3

Recommendation from the panel

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

The question of the follow-up of evaluations by Hcéres, and previously by AERES, has been addressed in regular discussions with the stakeholders in evaluation, and in particular with the evaluated entities. Indeed, the integrated evaluation process that applies to the entities, and the duration of this process impose a considerable burden that Hcéres is constantly striving to reduce.

Regarding institutional evaluations, two new items have been introduced:

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

For the programme evaluations, the implementation of programme accreditation, replacing the approval process, has enabled the inclusion of measures in response to the recommendations made by the panels. The analysis of accreditation project files whether the institutions have implemented relevant responses to the recommendations made in the evaluation of the reviews.

Recommendation from the panel

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

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 was not applicable to it, it could choose not to develop that point in its self-evaluation. For example, the institutional standard contains references to the institution's relationships with a University Hospital, but some universities do not offer medical programmes and have no links with a University Hospital. In addition, in order to empower the institutions and in accordance with their autonomy in terms of internal quality assurance, Hcéres gave

institutions the freedom to develop their own self-evaluation reports according to their own plan, provided that they addressed all the points in the evaluation standard.

In response to this recommendation, each institution is now asked to draw up its self-evaluation report in accordance with the plan set out in the Hcéres standard. 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 external evaluation standard.

Hcéres has experimented with the use of two separate evaluation standards – one for universities and one for specialist institutions – in order to ensure their pertinence and take into account the differences between these types of institutions. In light of future developments and Hcéres' new organisational structure, the use of these two separate evaluation standards will be phased out at the end of the current evaluation group (B 2020/2021), when they will be replaced by an evaluation standard which is currently in preparation.

ESG 2.4

Recommendation from the panel

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

A separate area of the website has been set aside for 'Hcéres' experts'.
<https://www.hceres.fr/en/panels-experts>

To foster the broader dissemination of this culture of quality, promote the role of experts in the evaluation process, and raise awareness within the academic community or even among the general public, an educational video has been produced, which presents some of the principles for the selection of experts, their role, and an insight into the composition and functioning of panels.

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

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

Recommendation from the panel

The Agency should consider actively involving international experts in review panels by developing and implementing a consistent approach to their selection and recruitment, including for evaluations conducted abroad.

International experts have systematically participated in Hcéres' evaluation panels for the evaluation of French institutions since 2010.

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

For study programme evaluation panels, international expertise is sought whenever possible among academic experts recruited to panels.

Recommendation from the panel

Hcéres should involve students and employer representatives in the panels for all types of evaluations and reinforce their role as full members by providing proper and regular training.

Irrespective of the type of evaluation process, only two statuses are applicable to Hcéres experts, each implying different responsibilities on the panel: those held by the chair of the panel and the expert.

No distinction is made among experts belonging to the same panel. Each is responsible for contributing to the evaluation and its preparation, and to drafting the report. Students and representatives of the business socio-economic sector are fully fledged members of Hcéres panels.

All evaluations – of institutions, study programmes, international evaluations etc. – must include one student expert or recent PhD on their panel of experts.

Training is provided to all experts, in person wherever possible, or otherwise via webinars.

ESG 2.5

Recommendation from the panel

Hcéres should refine the 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 focus on different aspects:

- The institutional dimension of the establishment or territorial cluster
- The overall range of study programmes, the fields of study or research units.

These aspects cover different levels of responsibility and different remits, which the Hcéres standards take into account and are perfectly tailored to their specific requirements. However, they have all been developed according to a common model that is divided into fields, each of which is then composed of standards illustrated by different qualitative criteria.

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

In addition, each evaluation procedure is coordinated by a dedicated Hcéres team which ensures that the methodology and the standards are properly and consistently applied.

ESG 2.7

Recommendation from the panel

The panel advises Hcéres to coordinate its complaints procedure with the accrediting and contracting ministries, in order to promote a coherent approach to complaints and appeals. The panel advises Hcéres to launch its complaints and appeals committee's activities as soon as possible, so that it can check that its new methodologies are effective and fit for purpose.

Details of the appeals process, i.e. the rules of procedure and membership of the complaints and appeals committee, were updated at the Board meeting of 1st March 2021. They have since been published on the Hcéres website⁵³.

As per the recommendation made by EQAR, the committee now includes a qualified external expert, who is appointed by the Hcéres President to represent the higher education system and provide an outside perspective on the cases considered. The committee thus comprises five representatives of the Hcéres Board, including the chair of the committee, three scientific advisors appointed by the Hcéres President from among the scientific advisors of the evaluation departments, including one with legal expertise, and one qualified external expert.

At this juncture it is important to reiterate the link between Hcéres' evaluations and the supervising ministries. 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 ministry in the decision-making process.

The respective responsibilities are therefore clearly defined and, concerning complaints:

- When evaluated entities have a complaint pertaining to an evaluation report or the evaluation process, they transmit 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 relevant 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 a constructive relationship with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the panel's suggestion to coordinate the complaints procedure with the ministry could 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 required for the conduct of the evaluation missions entrusted to Hcéres and to the recognition accorded to the High Council by the French higher education community.

ESG 3.3

Recommendation from the panel

The panel recommends that Hcéres should 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 an explicit definition of a conflict of interest in the context of the agency's work. In addition, the panels' independence can be reinforced by providing written guidance on what may constitute a conflict of interest in the evaluator's work and 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

⁵³ <https://www.hceres.fr/en/stakeholders>

stakeholders in the evaluation, and to improve the manner in which it is taken into consideration. Hcéres has produced a short explanatory video (2'30") defining and illustrating a conflict or coincidence of interest and how this can impact the recognition and legitimacy of the evaluations that are conducted. It also reminds internal staff that the analysis of any possible conflicts of interest is an essential part of the process of forming panels. The online publication of this video was accompanied by the publication of an internal memo on how to use the video for the training of experts, and on the procedures for handling feedback from them on any possible conflicts of interest.

The video is shown during the induction sessions for 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 from the panel

The panel recommends that Hcéres should make better use of the 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.

In the 2017-2020 period, Hcéres set about restructuring its evaluation procedures by organising an integrated process involving all evaluation departments (DECT, DEE, DEF and DER), as well as the Hcéres Science and Technology Observatory (OST).

This process comprised two successive phases: one phase involving the evaluation of all entities based on the same site (study programmes, doctoral schools, research units, institutions and the territorial cluster for the site), followed by another phase producing summary reports (drawing up one summary of the evaluations of study programmes and doctoral schools, one for research, and one for the institutions). The summary report production phase culminated in an **integrated evaluation summary report, or integrated review, 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 number of evaluation reports that are used to draw up these summary reports and the time required to conduct the initial evaluations, this process takes a minimum of 18 to 20 months. As explained in the body of this report, the highly unstable circumstances of the most recent evaluation period have not always made it either possible or pertinent to produce this integrated site summary. The difficulties encountered in implementing site policies at the national level, and the strategic shift towards the institution, which is now the preferred focus for the evaluation, have prompted Hcéres to rethink the integrated evaluation process for Group C (2022-2023).

ESG 3.5

Recommendation from 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.

Hcéres has to cope with a steady increase in the scope of the entities to be evaluated (health programmes, study programmes under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, etc.). However, the allocated budget does not take account of this increase, which causes problems for Hcéres relating to material and human resources. Since 2018, a new recruitment procedure for scientific staff has been in place. In addition to the 'Scientific Advisors' (CS), formerly referred to as Scientific Delegates, who are seconded to Hcéres for a specified proportion of their working time (1 to 3 days a week), Hcéres now also recruits 'Project Managers' (CMS). This less costly status has enabled Hcéres to adapt the size of its scientific staff and enable it to correspond more closely to the number of entities to be evaluated. Nonetheless, it raises questions about these project managers' ability to fulfil their commitments. Thirty-nine of these Project Managers were mobilised for Group D (2017-2018), and 32 for Group E (2018-2019).

ESG 3.6

Recommendation from 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 pre-existing internal quality assurance tools, both common and specific, in a single Handbook.

Since 2015, Hcéres has asserted its identity, with the aim of communicating more widely about its values, principles and objectives. This work culminated in the launch of the agency's new website 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 implemented a quality assurance cycle for 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 make it more precise and improve the systems that are implemented, and that these changes have been identified through the feedback that is received each year. These regular modifications are non-substantial changes which maintain the continuity of the existing processes, and therefore do not create any differences between previous and subsequent evaluations.

Given the scale of the French higher education system, Hcéres covers the entire scope of its remit over a period of 5 years. Limiting improvements to once every five years would be less effective, and would also contradict the message that Hcéres is striving to convey to higher education institutions: that quality assurance is a continuous, and not an episodic, activity.

Furthermore, the regulatory framework in which Hcéres operates also changes on a regular basis; examples include the implementation of accreditation, and the revamping of undergraduate study programmes. Hcéres has no choice but to take these developments into account immediately, in order to ensure the pertinence of its evaluations and make sure that they meet the expectations of all stakeholders.

Regarding 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 from the panel

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

Since the earliest days of the agency (AERES, followed by Hcéres), the annual cycle of preparation, organisation, and execution of evaluation campaigns has always been based on a policy of continuous improvement incorporating annual feedback, and resulting in the periodic introduction of changes and improvements. In 2010, the first external evaluation of AERES was eagerly 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 intense internal discussions, and when they were deemed to be relevant and realistic given Hcéres' context, objectives and commitments to its stakeholders, they gave rise to corrective actions or even to larger-scale projects. The comprehensive revision of the study programme evaluation process to include students in the evaluation panels, and the progress made in the training of experts, bear witness to the importance attached to the experts' recommendations.

13. SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The quality of the evaluation reports produced, guaranteed by robust reviewing processes. - Hcéres' agility and responsiveness in adapting to changes in the regulatory framework, while ensuring the equitable treatment of all evaluated institutions. - A quality cycle, which systematically includes feedback from stakeholders, ensuring that evaluations are both pertinent and well received. - The professional experience of the administrative and scientific personnel involved in the organisation and implementation of evaluation operations. - The supervision of the evaluation process by scientific advisors recruited for their disciplinary expertise, who are also peers. - The availability of a variety of training tools for experts, helping them accomplish their missions. - The absence of appeals and complaints despite the existence of a dedicated commission. - A stronger capacity for international action. - The expertise of the OST in the production of indicators and analyses of scientific output that inform evaluations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulties encountered in recruiting experts from the socio-economic sector. - A new system is required to maintain an up-to-date pool of experts, particularly students and recent PhDs. - The technology underpinning the evaluation monitoring application is nearly obsolete, leaving limited room for improvements and requiring a general overhaul. - The insufficient simplification of evaluation standards and processes which needs to be pursued. - The integration of departments is in progress, but could still be improved. - The communication policy is in need of modernisation, particularly with regard to the use of social networks to share the results of evaluations and promote a culture of quality in higher education.
Opportunities	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The transformation of Hcéres into an independent public authority will serve to reinforce its autonomy. - Hcéres' new role as coordinator of all evaluation bodies in the higher education sector provides an opportunity to clarify and optimise the evaluation systems in place at the national level. - The perspective of integrated evaluation and the developments following the accreditation reform offer Hcéres the opportunity to adapt the granularity of its evaluations of programmes. - The much-needed overhaul of the information system is an opportunity to improve its operational and ergonomic characteristics, while also developing new functions to support all Hcéres' activities. - The central role assigned to Hcéres by the Research Programming Law on issues relating to research integrity and ethics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The timetable for this structural transformation is tight, with new missions also being added (coordination of evaluation bodies).

14. CURRENT CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

This self-evaluation was conducted shortly after the appointment of a new governance team at Hcéres. The agency's new President and Board have been in place since October 2020. New directors of the departments responsible for evaluating institutions (DEE), organisations (DEO) and academic programmes (DEF) were appointed at the Board meeting held on 1st March 2021, as part of a broader restructuring of Hcéres' internal organisation. 2021 will be a decisive year for Hcéres, with the agency working to prepare for and organise its upcoming change of administrative status while also rethinking and redesigning its evaluation processes. Furthermore, the French higher education and research ecosystem is rapidly evolving, particularly in terms of the economic models and management of universities: new missions, new resources, the exploitation of research results, new management structures, professional budgetary and financial management, and the importance and reliability of information systems, in addition to the need to review and update the contractual relations between institutions and their supervising ministries.

The field of study programmes has also seen many regulatory changes: the numerous reforms underway, including the reforms of the undergraduate cycles (Law on Student Guidance and Success) and of health studies, are likely to give rise to changes in the scope of the programmes evaluated by Hcéres (e.g. *Bachelors universitaires de technologie* (University Bachelor of Technology) degrees, replacing the *Diplômes universitaires de technologie* (University Technological Diplomas) and a large number of vocational bachelor's degrees, bachelor's-degree-level paramedical programmes, etc.). Similarly, with the Research Programming Law giving Hcéres responsibility for coordinating evaluation bodies and validating the evaluation processes of other evaluation bodies, such as the CTI and the CEFDG, collaborative work has begun with these bodies on the evaluation procedures for institutional degrees (such as the bachelor programmes run by engineering schools and business schools) with a view to the awarding of bachelor's-degree-level status.

In this context, an internal seminar was held on 5-6 May 2021.

This seminar gave the new senior management team an opportunity to reflect on the developments, build team spirit by sharing observations and outlooks, and capitalise on the innovations introduced in response to the COVID-19 crisis with a view to preparing for future key decisions.

Participants included members of the Executive Committee, heads of department, scientific advisors, subject managers from the General Secretariat and DSI, and several external guests.

The topics covered constitute a road map for Hcéres in the immediate future, outlining the general thrusts of its future strategic plan.

Revising evaluation standards and processes

These changes are driven by the desire to provide simplified and integrated strategic evaluations. The evaluation standards need to satisfy a range of different expectations: those of the government and the supervising ministries, of institutions, research and teaching staff, and of Hcéres. They also need to anticipate emerging trends, by giving research integrity and ethics more prominent roles, for example. Developing these new standards will require seamless collaboration between departments, the promotion of a harmonious approach, the avoidance of overlaps and repetition, and the adoption of a design based on complementarity while also drawing upon feedback from previous experiments, particularly on the evaluation of undergraduate programmes. The aim of the revision process is to streamline and simplify these systems, using a clear, common vocabulary. This will lead to the phasing out of a certain number of programme evaluation standards (e.g. for the master's field and doctoral college), and the incorporation of their relevant components into the institutional evaluation standard. A single institutional evaluation visit to the institution may also be organised. This new integration process, coordinated by the Department of Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions (DEE), will require the involvement of the Department of Academic Programme Evaluation (DEF) in the evaluation of an institution's general study policy. By the same token, the Department of Research Evaluation (DER) and the Department of Evaluation of Research Bodies (DEO) will need to be involved in the evaluation of an institution's overall research policy. This new, more decompartmentalised way of working is currently in the design stage.

Improving the production of reports and communication

Report writing can be improved, and a modern communication policy, including the pertinent use of social media to share evaluation reports and promote a culture of quality in higher education, should also be implemented.

Finalising a new internal structure, consistent with the transition to API status

Hcéres' previous organisational structure was no longer fit for purpose in the current climate. It seemed germane to establish a DEO (Department of Evaluation of Research Bodies), which now covers national research bodies and their relations with universities and specialised higher education institutions, as well as research infrastructures. This enables the DEE (Department of Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions) to focus exclusively on universities and specialist universities. This new allocation of responsibilities precedes a more in-depth and progressive reorganisation of these departments, which is as yet to be defined, and which must also properly equip them to carry out their new missions, while fostering seamless relationships between departments and inventing a new "integrated evaluation" process.

The transition to independent public authority (API) status also provides an opportunity to reassess the allocation of human resources, and also to rethink and redefine our activities.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A-B

AAI	<i>Autorité administrative indépendante</i> (Independent administrative authority)
ACA	Academic Cooperation Association
AERES	Agency for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education
AMAQ-SUP	Malian National Quality Assurance Authority for Higher Education
ANAQ-SUP	Senegalese National Quality Assurance Authority for Higher Education
ANECA	<i>Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación</i>
ANVUR	<i>Agenzia di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca</i>
API	<i>Autorité publique indépendante</i> (Independent public authority)
BTS	<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur</i> (Advanced Vocational Training Certificate)

C

CCN-IUT	<i>Commission consultative nationale des instituts universitaires de technologie</i> (National Advisory Commission for University Technology Institutes)
CEAIE	China Education Association for International Exchange
CEFDG	Evaluation Commission for Qualifications issued by Business Schools
CEQUINT	Certificate for Quality of Internationalisation
CHU	<i>Centre hospitalo-universitaire</i> (University Hospital)
CIC	<i>Centre d'investigation clinique</i> (Clinical Investigation Centre)
CIEP	<i>Centre international d'études pédagogiques</i> (International Centre for Teaching Studies)
CNE	<i>Comité national d'évaluation</i> (National Evaluation Committee)
CNER	<i>Comité national d'évaluation de la recherche</i> (National Committee for Evaluation of Research)
CNIL	<i>Commission nationale informatique et libertés</i> (French Data Protection Commission)
CNRS	<i>Centre national de la recherche scientifique</i> (National Centre for Scientific Research)
COMEGAL	<i>Comité pour l'égalité dans l'enseignement supérieur et la recherche</i> (Committee for Equality in Higher Education and Research)
COMUE	<i>Communauté d'universités et institutions</i> (Community of Universities and Institutions)
CONEAU	<i>Comisión Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación Universitaria</i>
COS	<i>Comité d'orientation scientifique</i> (Scientific Steering Committee)
CP	<i>Chargé de projet</i> (Head of Project)
CPGE	<i>Classe préparatoire aux grandes écoles</i> (Preparatory classes for grandes écoles)
CPU	<i>Conférence des présidents d'université</i> (Conference of University Presidents)
CTI	<i>Commission des titres d'ingénieurs</i> (Engineering qualifications commission)
CS	<i>Conseiller scientifique</i> (Scientific Advisor)
CV	<i>Curriculum vitae</i>

D

Dépt	<i>Département</i>
DROM	<i>Département et régions d'Outre-Mer</i> (French Overseas Territories)
DUP	<i>Document unique de projet</i> (Single Project Document)
ECA	European Consortium for Accreditation
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ED	<i>Ecole doctorale</i> (doctoral school)
EDM	Electronic Document Management
ENIC-NARIC	European Network of Information Centres in the European Region - National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EPO	European Patents Office
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
ESR	<i>Enseignement supérieur et recherche</i> (Higher Education and Research)
ESU	European Students' Union

F-H

FrAQ-Sup	<i>Réseau francophone des agences qualité pour l'enseignement supérieur</i> (Network of French-Speaking Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education)
FTE	Full-time equivalent
Hcéres	French High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education
HR	Human Resources

I-L

INAAAREES	<i>Institut national pour l'évaluation, l'accréditation et la reconnaissance des études de l'enseignement supérieur</i> (Angolan National Institute for the Evaluation, Accreditation and Recognition of Higher Education)
INRA	<i>Institut national de la recherche agronomique</i> (National Institute for Agronomic Research)
INSERM	<i>Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale</i> (National Institute for Health and Medical Research)
IS	Information systems
IUT	<i>Institut universitaire de technologie</i> (University Technology Institutes)
L	<i>Licence</i> (Bachelor's degree)
LMD	<i>Licence-Master-Doctorat</i> (Bachelor's-Master's-Doctorate)
LP	<i>Licence professionnelle</i> (Professional Bachelor's Degree)
LRU	<i>Loi relative aux libertés et responsabilités des universités</i> (Law on the Freedoms and Responsibilities of Universities)

M-N

M	Master's degree
MEA	Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs
MEEF	<i>Métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation</i> (Teaching, Education and Training Professions)
MENJS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MESRI	Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation,
MSTP	<i>Mission scientifique, technique et pédagogique</i> (Scientific, Technical and Educational Mission)
NIAD-UE	National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation

O-P

OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OST	<i>Observatoire des sciences et techniques</i> (Science and Technology Observatory)

Q-R

PRES	<i>Pôle de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur</i> (Higher Education and Research Cluster)
QACHE	Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education
RAP	<i>Rapport annuel de performance</i> (Annual Performance Report)
RTRA	<i>Réseaux thématiques de recherche avancée</i> (Thematic Networks for Advanced Research)

S-T

STS	<i>Section de techniciens supérieurs</i> (Advanced Technical Studies Units)
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V

VAE	<i>Validation d'acquis de l'expérience</i> (Recognition of Prior Learning)
VAP	<i>Validation d'acquis professionnels</i> (Recognition of Professional Experience)
VES	<i>Validation d'études supérieures</i> (Recognition of Advanced Studies)

LIST OF ANNEXES

- A - Institutional evaluation standards - Group B
- B - Evaluation standards for degree programmes and for doctoral schools - Group B
- C - International evaluation standards and accreditation criteria
- D - Evaluation Charter and Charter for online visit
- E - Status of experts, scientific advisers and scientific project managers
- F - Declaration of interests
- G - Declaration of commitments



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