



Agence pour l'Evaluation de
la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur

Guide for expert committee members

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The purpose of this guide is to give experts details of the external assessment procedure* for higher education courses as provided for in the *Decree of 22 February 2008 covering various measures related to the organisation and functioning of the Agency for Assessing the Quality of Higher Education organised or subsidised by the French Community (AEQES)*. The procedure is also based on the "*Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area*"¹ adopted in Bergen in 2005.

You will find a glossary at the end of this guide. In it, all terms marked with an asterisk (*) are defined.

INTRODUCTION

QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Higher education is going through profound changes in the European context. Over the last few years, these have had major repercussions on all of Europe's education systems.

In 1998, the Council of Europe issued a Recommendation² inviting Member States to establish "[...] *transparent quality assurance systems with the following aims:*

- *to safeguard the quality of higher education within the specific economic, social and cultural context of their countries while taking due account of the European dimension and of a rapidly changing world,*
- *to encourage and help higher education institutions* to use appropriate measures, particularly quality assurance, as a means of improving the quality of teaching and learning and also training for research, another important part of their task,*
- *to stimulate mutual exchanges of information on quality and quality assurance at Community and world level and to encourage cooperation between higher education institutions* in this area; [...]"*.

In June 1999, 29 ministers responsible for higher education signed the *Declaration of Bologna*, undertaking to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA)*.

What has since become known as the "Bologna Reform" is now in progress:

- the introduction of a system of easily understandable and comparable qualifications
- the organisation of studies based on two cycles (Bachelor: 180 ECTS* credits; Master: 60 or 120 ECTS credits)³
- the promotion of mobility of students, teachers and researchers
- the promotion of European cooperation with regard to quality assurance
- the promotion of the European dimension in higher education.

At their Prague meeting in 2001, the Ministers urged universities, national quality assurance agencies and ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, previously known as the European Network of Quality Assurance) to collaborate in defining a reference framework for quality assurance in higher education.

In September 2003, the Berlin communiqué acknowledged that "*the primary responsibility with regard to quality assurance lies with each institution itself*"⁴. Four European players in the area of quality assurance

¹ ENQA "Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area" Helsinki 2005
[http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20(2).pdf)

² Council Recommendation 98/561/EC of 24 September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education

³ The third cycle, the Doctorate, is solely university-based

were identified: ENQA*, EUA* (European University Association), EURASHE* (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) and ESU* (European Students Unions, previously known as ESIB*). The Berlin communiqué recommends the assessment of course programmes and education institutions, but also of assessment agencies.

In 2005, in the Declaration of Bergen, the Ministers adopted the *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance* in the EHEA*. In adopting this document, the Ministers accepted that the assessment of higher education was based on three interlinked phases: self-assessment*, external assessment* by peers and the publication of the results. In addition, the assessment was to include student representation.

At the meeting of Ministers in London in May 2007, ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and ESU were requested to set up a European quality assurance register (EQAR*). This came into existence in 2008, with the first agencies appearing in the register in December of that year.

At the April 2009 ministerial conference in Leuven - Louvain-la-Neuve, the European ministers again gave priority to guaranteeing quality, insisting on the necessity to introduce quality assurance into all higher education institutions (HEIs) and underlining the importance of *transparent tools [...] and using comparable data and suitable indicators as a basis for describing the different profiles of higher education institutions and their course programmes*⁵

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AGENCY IN BELGIUM'S FRENCH COMMUNITY

In response to the Bologna Process quality assurance objective, the Parliament of the French Community adopted a decree on 14 November 2002⁶ creating the Agency for Assessing the Quality of Higher Education (AEQES*). The latter was to compile a methodology enabling the assessment of several long-type and/or short-type courses: pharmacy, architecture, electronics, electro-mechanics, agronomy, physical therapy, criminology and social work.

After gaining several years' experience, it was seen as a good idea to restructure the Agency and its resources, making its functioning more efficient and aligning it better with European principles. This led to a new decree being adopted in 2008⁷, in line with the recommendations found in the *Standards and Guidelines* adopted in Bergen.

The Decree of 22 February 2008, as is the case with the *Standards and Guidelines*, contains non-prescriptive texts aimed at encouraging higher education institutions* to develop a quality assurance culture, while at the same time maintaining their autonomy and creativity.

The actual choice of which quality assurance system an HEI uses has been intentionally left up to the HEIs themselves. A number of QA tools exist (for instance, EFQM, TRIS, PROZA, CAF, ISO, EQUIS, etc.) and it is up to each institution to choose which is best suited to its requirements or to decide to develop its own system. The main thing is that each HEI questions the quality of its teaching, specifying how it conceives quality assurance and how it is implemented. The use of a QA tool helps guarantee the sustainability of any quality assurance system, ensuring a better link-up between an institution's departments and its central services.

The main changes introduced by the Decree of 22 February 2008 are:

- The election of the AEQES President and Vice-President from among Steering Committee* members, guaranteeing the Agency's independence

⁴ Communiqué of the European Ministers of Education in conference in Berlin on 19 September 2003.

⁵ Communiqué of the European Ministers of Education in conference at Leuven - Louvain-la-Neuve on 28-29 April 2009

⁶ Decree of 14 November 2002 establishing the Agency for Assessing the Quality of Higher Education organised or subsidised by the French Community (AEQES)

⁷ Decree of 22 February 2008 on the organisation and functioning of the Agency for Assessing the Quality of Higher Education organised or subsidised by the French Community

- The heightened involvement of the Higher Education Councils (HECs)* (the communications interface between the Agency and the HEIs*), giving them the option of amending the list of performance indicators*⁸ on a course-by-course basis, making suggestions for drafting and updating the 10-year plan, and involving them in the selection of potential experts)
- The drafting and annual update of a 10-year assessment plan
- Increases in resources (funds and staff)
- A follow-up obligation (publication of a timetable and plan for following up the experts' recommendations)
- Publication, for a given course, of final summary reports* for the HEIs inspected, follow-up plans related to these same HEIs, and a system-wide analysis*
- The obligation for an external assessment of the Agency once every 5 years

The 2008 decree upheld the objectives and spirit of the overall approach: quality enhancement via two-stage-assessment (internal by players within the institution itself (self-assessment) and external by independent experts) focused on first- and second-cycle programmes.

AEQES* is not a certification agency*. It only issues recommendations promoting the development of a genuine quality assurance culture in the HEIs.

The legislator came out clearly against any ranking of HEIs by the Agency⁹.

⁸ Decree of the Government of the French Community of 11 April 2008 establishing the reference list of performance indicators* in application of Article 11 of the Decree of 22 February 2008

⁹Article 20 of the Decree of 22 February 2008

THE AGENCY'S MISSIONS

The Agency is responsible for helping enhance the quality of higher education (universities, Hautes Écoles, higher colleges of arts, institutes of architecture and adult education institutions).

In order to perform these missions, the Agency operates completely independently both in planning its activities and in implementing and managing its assessment procedures. The Agency itself is assessed every five years as required by the *Standards and Guidelines*.

In this context, it is responsible for:

1. assessing higher education courses, highlighting best practices, deficits and problems needing to be resolved
2. ensuring the 10-yearly planning and implementation of assessment procedures
3. promoting cooperation between all elements of higher education with a view to enhancing quality on the level of each HEI
4. drafting proposals for policymakers for improving the overall quality of higher education
5. determining and planning the assessments to be carried out on a multi-annual basis
6. representing the French Community in national and international bodies in matters concerning quality assessment in higher education.

As a consequence, under the Decree the Agency:

- draws up and updates the 10-year plan of courses to be assessed
- proposes to the Government the reference list of performance indicators, adapted on a course-by-course basis
- appoints the expert committee* and its chairman
- manages scheduled assessments and makes sure that assessment procedures are complied with
- publishes on its website the final summary report of each HEI, together with the system-wide analysis for the course as a whole.

The Agency interacts with the HECs with regard to the following tasks:

- passing on information put out by Agency and making sure that site visits by experts run smoothly
- proposing annual updates to the 10-year course assessment plan
- modifying the list of performance indicators for each course to be assessed, in reference to the list of performance indicators decreed by the Government
- proposing lists of experts.

METHODOLOGY implemented in the French Community

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The 10-year plan and how assessment takes place

A 10-year plan of the courses to be assessed is compiled by the Agency in such a way that each course can be assessed at least once every ten years. In accordance with the provisions of the Decree¹⁰, the 10-year plan is updated every year, taking into account any suggestions from the HECs. The annual scheduling of the courses and HEIs to be assessed is compiled in such a way that assessments pertaining to the same course or similar courses are carried out simultaneously in all HEIs offering them.

Certain assessments pertain to a system-wide grouping of courses involving different types of HEIs (for example, "Computer science" covers the assessment of university courses in "computer science"; the "e-business" and "information management" courses offered by Hautes Ecoles; and the "informatics and systems" courses offered by Hautes Ecoles and adult education institutes).

Quality assessment: objectives and scope

The whole operation revolves around the **quality of teaching** in the various **first- and second-cycle courses** offered by the HEIs¹¹.

The goal followed is not just to come up with a well-grounded analysis of the quality of the education programmes assessed, but also to provide suggestions for improvements, thereby helping the various stakeholders (management, heads of departments and teachers) to enhance quality.

Assessments are based on the **list of performance indicators** covering all education and organisation systems needing to be taken into account. They focus on determining the objectives pursued by the various courses and matching these with the resources made available to achieve them.

This list of performance indicators¹² is decreed by the Government: using the template for compiling the self-assessment report* requested from each HEI with a course to be assessed, it has chapters referring to the HEI's structure and governance, the structure and specialties of the study programmes assessed, the target audience of the study programme, the resources made available, external relations and the analysis and planning of strategic action¹³.

The two-stage assessment:

Internal assessment: this phase comes under the responsibility of the academic authorities*. It is conducted by the coordinator* in accordance with the list of performance indicators found in the *"Guide for Coordinators" published by the Agency*¹⁴. The internal assessment takes the form of a **self-assessment report*** compiled by an internal assessment commission* led by the person appointed responsible by the HEI. On completion, this report is sent to the AEQES Executive Office*, which in turn forwards it to each member of the expert committee.

External assessment: the expert committee visits each HEI to be assessed, subsequently compiling a **preliminary report** solely for the attention of the institution assessed. This report is then supplemented by comments/observations from the HEI. This preliminary report, together with the HEI's comments/observations, then becomes the final summary report*.

¹⁰ Article 10

¹¹ Article 9

¹² See ANNEX A

¹³ Article 11

¹⁴ *Guide for Coordinators, methodology notes* - AEQES, Brussels /2009

This guide can also be downloaded from the Agency's website www.aeqes.be

On completion of all site visits, the expert committee then compiles a status report covering the course. This status report serves as the basis for compiling the system-wide analysis*. The Agency may also consider working together with an external agency. A specific procedure has been developed for this purpose

Publication of assessment results

For each HEI, the **final summary report**, containing any comments/observations of its academic authorities, is published¹⁵ on the Agency's website (www.aeges.be).

On the basis of the final summary reports and the status report compiled by the experts, the Agency publishes every year on its website a **system-wide analysis** of the quality of the courses assessed. This system-wide analysis is also sent to the Government.

Follow-up procedures

In the six months following the publication of the final summary reports on the Agency's website, each institution **provides the Agency with a timetable and plan for following up the recommendations of the expert committee**. This document is published on the Agency's website, with a direct link to the final summary reports. At the request of the HEI involved, a report on the implementation status of the follow-up plan may also be published every three years on the Agency's website.¹⁶

¹⁵ The legislator has foreseen a procedure allowing an HEI to refuse publication of its report (Article 18 of the AEQES Decree of 22 February 2008). A further procedure covers the conditions under which publication takes place (Decree of the Government of the French Community of 19 December 2008 setting the content of the final summary report of the assessment of a higher education course with a view to its publication and the terms and conditions under which the follow-up plan and status report are published).

¹⁶ Article 5 and 6 of the Decree of the Government of the French Community (AGCF) of 19 December 2008

OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

For each course to be assessed, the Agency commissions the expert committee to carry out a mission with the following objectives / expectations:

Objectives	Expected results
<i>for each HEI visited</i>	
<p>on the basis of the facts established (the internal report and the interviews that take place during the site visit), to verify the extent to which the general and specific course objectives match the resources made available by the HEI to achieve such</p> <p>to identify the paths and resources available to the HEI to improve its performance</p> <p>to come up with recommendations</p>	<p>an oral account of the first findings of the expert committee, presented at the end of the site visit to the HEI by the committee's chairman</p> <p>a confidential preliminary report containing a SWOT analysis and/or the main findings and recommendations for each HEI visited. This is sent exclusively to the management and coordinator(s) concerned. HEI management may then make comments/observations.</p> <p>a final summary report is subsequently sent to the Agency. This consists of the preliminary report together with any comments/observations from HEI management.</p>
<i>for Belgium's French Community</i>	
<p>to specify, on the basis of the site visits, the risks and opportunities for the whole course</p> <p>to identify ways and means, either already available or needing to be introduced, for enhancing the quality of the course in the French Community</p> <p>to suggest ways of enhancing quality and to come up with recommendations.</p>	<p>a status report consisting of a contextualised presentation of the course offering and its place in the French Community's education market, and comparing it with practices in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This status report also contains a SWOT analysis of all assessed courses, along with a list of recommendations for improving overall quality. These recommendations may be addressed to specific stakeholders.</p> <p>This status report is sent to the Agency.</p> <p>On the basis of the final summary reports and the status report compiled by the expert committee, the Agency each year publishes a system-wide analysis of the quality of the courses assessed on</p>

	<p>its website.</p> <p>This analysis lists the HEIs visited, as well as the dates of the visits; the analysis also includes the status report compiled by the expert committee, and concludes with the opinions of the Agency with regard to the whole assessment cycle.</p> <p>The system-wide analysis is also sent to the minister(s) responsible for higher education, the HECs and the institutions involved. It is also published on the Agency's website.</p>
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For the external assessment phase to run smoothly, it is important for each expert to subscribe to the following basic principles:

Integrity

The integrity of the experts represents the basis for the trust placed in them and the credibility attached to their judgment. Experts perform all aspects of their assessments fairly, not allowing their own interests or those of anyone else influence their judgment.

Objectivity

Experts gather, evaluate and communicate, in a rigorous and relevant manner, the information related to the activity or process examined. The judgments they pronounce draw on aspects identified in the self-assessment reports, in the relevant documentation or in the interviews. They make reference to the current status of knowledge and best practices in the areas described.

Consistency

Experts accord the same amount of attention to all involved in a course within an HEI and from one site visit to the next. Each external assessment of an HEI follows similar organisational and management criteria, thereby ensuring as far as possible equal treatment in the assessment process. This leads to findings and conclusions of a similar nature in comparable contexts.

Respect for diversity

Experts respect the diversity of an institution's projects, as well as the diversity of course objectives, inasmuch as they meet the overall objectives of higher education and quality.

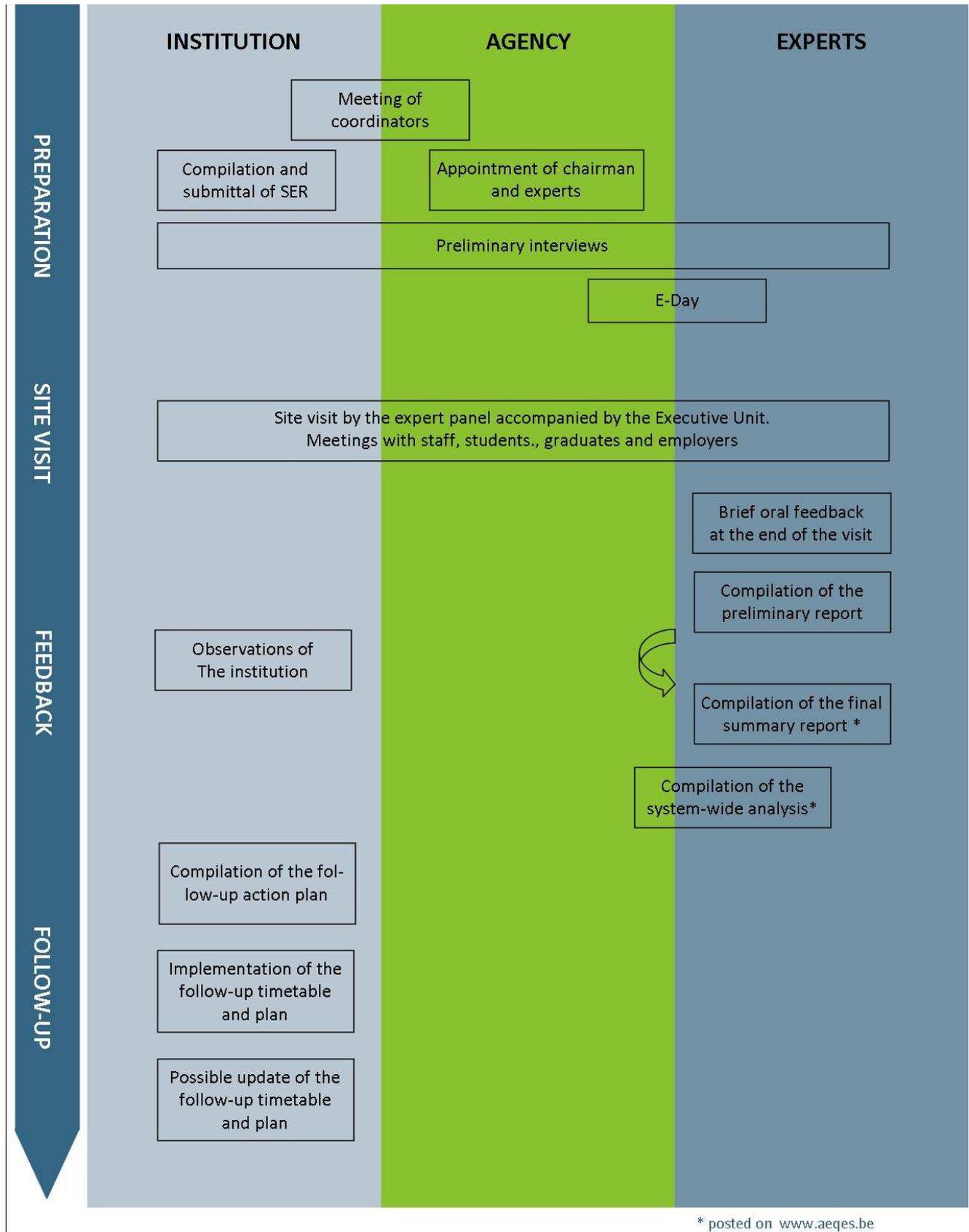
Confidentiality

Experts undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of all information they receive, as well as the contents of any confidential or restricted-use documents which they need to consult for the purpose of their duties or in the execution thereof.

Involvement

Experts make the most of their skills to meet their responsibilities and thus contribute fully to the success of their mission.

Assessment of a course by HEI:



BEFORE THE VISIT

Selection of the expert committee

Process

Each HEC affected by the assessment submits a list naming at least 12 experts for each course to be assessed (peers, businessmen, educationalists (optional)), possibly nominating one of them for the chairmanship of the committee).

For each candidate expert, the HEC has an ID file¹⁷ filled in. These are reviewed by the HEC, checking the eligibility of the experts proposed, in particular with regard to their independence. They are then sent to the Agency's Executive Office (with the CV in both paper and digital format attached). The HEC also seeks to obtain an agreement in principle from the candidate expert.

The Executive Office acknowledges receipt of the lists sent in by the various HECs, entering all the names into a database, along with any useful information. It then draws up a list reflecting the composition of a committee as stipulated in the decree: this list may contain more candidates than necessary. It is then submitted to the Agency's Steering Committee, which, if necessary, makes changes, possibly adds to it, and validates its contents.

The Agency's Steering Committee selects the expert committee's chairman from among the approved candidacies.

The chairman of the experts, following a pre-selection carried out by the Executive Office, validates the composition of the committee.

Profiles

Peer expert: a person with recognised experience in higher education and in the main sub-area of the course to be assessed. Experience in setting up/designing study programmes is an asset.

Business representative coming from the profession involved: person familiar with the ins and outs of various fields of the profession, preferably practicing in Belgium.

Educationalist: either an expert in the course with recognised teaching experience or an educationalist with recognised teaching experience at higher education level.

In addition, one expert at least must work professionally outside Belgium. Generally speaking, all experts must be involved in some way or another in public life.

Furthermore, it is deemed an asset for each expert to have the following QA skills:

- to have already taken part in the assessment of a higher education course
- to have taken part in the implementation of QA procedures in his/her own HEI or organisation (whatever the method used, e.g. ISO, EFQM, Prose, CAF, TRIS, etc)
- to have (had) management responsibility and to be familiar with QA and teaching assessment issues.
- to come from a quality assurance agency belonging to ENQA* and/or the Register (EQAR*)

It is similarly deemed an asset for each expert to have:

¹⁷ The ID file template can be downloaded from the Agency's website www.aeqes.be. It is also to be found in ANNEX C.

- knowledge of the higher education system in Belgium and Europe
- knowledge of the objectives and practical details of the Bologna process

At the same time, great importance is attached to personal and communication skills: excellent listening ability, the ability to work in a team (and, with regard to chairman, to lead one), commitment to QA, politeness and assertiveness.

Last but not least, it is imperative that each expert has the ability to step back in his/her assessment, taking any decision independently of any personal preferences. The expert must not have had any contractual relationship with an HEI within the two years prior to the scheduled dates of visits (connections for research purposes are not taken into account). The expert consequently signs a declaration of independence (part of a potential expert's ID file, cf. Annex C).

Constitution of the expert committee

The expert committee is constituted in accordance with Article 16 of the Decree. It consists of:

- at a minimum, three experts representing different aspects of the course, at least one of whom works outside Belgium.
- a business representative from the profession associated with the course
- optionally, an educationalist.

In consultation with the chairman of the expert committee, the Agency's Executive Office contacts the selected experts and offers them an assessment contract (contrat d'expertise) ¹⁸ for the duration of the assessment process. The amount of the expert's remuneration and the description of reimbursement of expenses are specified in the contract.

Once the committee has been constituted and all the members have formally given their acceptance, a summary of the experts' CVs - approved by them - is posted on the Agency's website under the section for the course under consideration.

As far as possible, the same expert committee will be constituted to assess the HEIs offering the same course or similar courses. Otherwise, it will be up to the chairman to ensure the greatest possible consistency within the external assessment of all HEIs.

Should the Agency work with an external agency, a mixed committee is formed in agreement with the two bodies in the context of the specific procedure.

Preparation and organisation of the site visits

Once all self-assessment reports have arrived, the Executive Office forwards them to the experts, giving them the opportunity to become acquainted with their contents before the pre-visit meetings between the chairman and the HEI (for the chairman) and the committee's preparatory meeting ("E-Day" for the experts) take place.

These documents must enable the experts to gain a first impression of the teaching reality to be assessed and to draw up an assessment table¹⁹ in which they can record their first impressions and any questions they would like to ask in interviews.

Pre-visit meeting between the HEI and the chairman of the expert committee

¹⁸ A template contract may be downloaded from the Agency's website <http://www.aeges.be>. It is also to be found in ANNEX B.

¹⁹ A sample assessment table is sent to the chairman for review. This table and the possibility of using it are discussed at the expert committee's preparatory meeting.

A first meeting between the chairman of the expert committee and each HEI is organised by the Executive Office*.

This meeting, lasting about one and a half hours for each HEI, takes place either at the HEI or at AEQES. It enables a first contact to be established between the chairman of the expert committee and the head(s) of the HEI, its QA coordinator, and the coordinator of the assessment commission of the department/unit to be assessed. During the meeting the expectations attached to the visit are gone through.

A further objective is to map out the broad outlines of the external assessment work based on the information contained in the HEI's self-assessment report and to finalise a schedule of interviews²⁰ to be held as part of the expert committee's visit.

Preparatory meeting of the Committee of Experts*: "E Day"

A day is planned at the Agency for the full committee of experts - the so-called "E-Day". This preparatory meeting serves several purposes:

- to get the experts working together as a team
- to present the higher education landscape in the French Community, along with any specific features of the course to be evaluated (possibly with an external speaker chosen by his/her HEC)
- to allow the chairman to report on the pre-visit talks with the HEIs
- to restate the overall context of the assessment, the legal framework, the objectives and expected results, as well as the timetable
- to go through the ethical principles and define the methodology to be used by the committee, detailing the roles and responsibilities of each expert
- to establish a first joint analysis of the self-assessment reports (with the help of an assessment table)

²⁰ See sample schedule in ANNEX D.

DURING THE VISIT

The on-site assessment activities consist of the following:

- interviews with
 - the academic authorities
 - members of the academic, scientific, technical and administrative staff of the course being assessed
 - students (ideally a representative of each level of studies)
 - graduates from the last three years
 - possible partners (companies, associations, research institutions, etc.).

It is important to state that each of these meetings takes place completely confidentially, without the academic authorities being present. A private meeting is also devoted to them.

- the visit to the HEI's facilities (classrooms, labs, documentation centres, the admin offices, etc.)
- the study of documents (including digital ones) made available to the committee in the context of the visit: teaching aids currently being used (reference books, manuals, syllabuses, course notes, etc.), written examinations (types of questions, examples of corrections, etc.), documents linked to the organisation of studies and to their communication
- debriefing meetings between expert committee members.

During the interviews, minutes are always taken by a member of the Agency's Executive Office. These confidential minutes are sent to all committee members at the end of the visit for the record and to support the compilation of the reports.

At the end of the interviews, the expert committee starts its SWOT analysis of the course, drafting recommendations tailored to the institution. This analysis becomes the basis for a presentation of findings at the end of the site visit, carried out by the chairman.

The presentation of the expert committee chairman takes place before the authorities of the HEI, members of the internal self-assessment commission, those consulted during the assessment and, more generally, anyone wishing to attend. The aim of the presentation is to highlight best practices and problems identified. It is a precursor to the preliminary report later to be sent to the HEI.

AFTER THE VISIT

Compilation, approval and dissemination of the reports

Preliminary and final summary reports

On completion of the site visits, the expert committee compiles a **preliminary report** (in French) for each institution. It consists of a SWOT analysis and a list of recommendations (attached to it will be a copy of the inspection programme and the list of people interviewed).

The expert committee chairman, on behalf of the committee's members and with their approval, is responsible for submitting the reports within the required period (cf. assessment contract). He is helped here by the Agency's Executive Office, which makes sure that all information exchanged is followed up.

The Executive Office sends this preliminary report to the academic authorities and the coordinator(s) concerned, giving the latter the opportunity of sending back any remarks within a specified period:

- the correction of any facts mentioned in the report
- and/or
- the comments/observations of the academic authorities, which will then be included in the final summary report published on the Agency's website.

The preliminary report, together with the comments/observations of the academic authorities, constitutes **the final summary report**²¹ for each HEI. This final summary report is published on the Agency's website. In their observations, the academic authorities can explicitly refuse to have the report published, though any such refusal must be justified²².

Status report

The committee compiles (in French) a status report consisting of a contextualised presentation of the course offering and its place in the French Community's education market, and comparing it with practices in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This status reports also contains a SWOT analysis of the whole assessed course, along with a list of recommendations for improving overall quality. This status report is compiled for the Agency, which includes it in its system-wide analysis of the course. The latter is sent to the minister(s) responsible for higher education and to the HECs involved. It is also published on the Agency's website.

Follow-up of the assessment (see pg. 12)

²¹ cf. AGCF of 19 December 2008

²² Cf. Article 18 of the Decree of 22 February 2008

1. Responsibilities of the Agency

The overall responsibility for the external assessment procedure lies with the Agency. It is the body appointing the chairman of the expert committee and delegating to the Agency's president the task of concluding an assessment contract with each expert.

The Agency mandates the expert committee to carry out the following:

- a. to subject the analysis and conclusions contained in the self-assessment report to an external review. This is done before the actual site visit of the expert committee.
- b. to attest the correspondence between the description contained in the report and their findings
- c. to examine how the resources described in the report match the needs
- d. to assess the level the objectives described in the report have been achieved
- e. to give an opinion on the relevance and feasibility of the proposed action plan
- f. to make any recommendations deemed useful for improving the quality of teaching.

2. Responsibilities of the expert committee

Preparation

- to read beforehand the self-assessment reports compiled prior to the expert committee's site visit
- to conduct an initial personal SWOT analysis, come up with provisional recommendations²³ and identify the issues to be looked into during the site visit
- to take part in the preparatory meeting between the expert committee and the Executive Office ("*E-Day*")
- to take part in the preparatory meetings preceding each site visit (included in the fixed programme).

Visit to the HEI

- to take into account the self-assessment results
- to study the institution's internal documents, including digital ones (study regulations, etc.) and ones specific to the course concerned (teaching aids, how assessments are carried out, etc.)
- to take part in the interviews (cf. pg. 20) and the visit to the facilities.

Compilation of the reports

- to take part in the talks contributing to the compilation of the preliminary reports, final summary reports and the status report (email exchanges and meetings arranged by the Executive Office)
- to compile (with the expert committee working as a team) the preliminary reports, the final summary reports and the status report on the course looked into.

²³ Assessment grid suggested by the Agency

3. Responsibilities of the expert committee's chairman

Preparation

- to constitute the expert committee in collaboration with the Agency's Executive Office
- to approve the timetable and logistic arrangements for the visits, as proposed by the Agency's Executive Office
- to read beforehand the self-assessment reports compiled prior to the expert committee's site visit*
- to prepare and chair, with the support of the Executive Office, the pre-visit meetings with the HEIs
- to conduct an initial personal SWOT analysis, come up with provisional recommendations²⁴ and identify the issues to be looked into during the site visit.
- to prepare, together with the Executive Office, the first working meeting of the expert committee ("E-Day"), and to take part in it, *inter alia* reporting on the pre-visit meetings with the HEIs
- to take part in the preparatory meetings preceding each site visit (included in the fixed programme)

Visit to the HEI

- to take into account the self-assessment results
- to study the institution's internal documents, including digital ones (study regulations, etc.) and ones specific to the course concerned (teaching aids, how assessments are carried out, etc, ...)
- to conduct the interviews (cf. pg. 20), ensuring they are properly conducted, with attention being paid to fairness and to each expert being given the requisite time to speak
- to give, on behalf of the expert committee, a presentation of site visit findings at the end of the visit to those responsible at the HEI

Compilation of the reports

- to chair the talks contributing to the compilation of the preliminary reports, final summary reports and the status report (email exchanges and meetings arranged by the Executive Office)
- to compile (with the expert committee working as a team) the preliminary reports and the final summary reports
- to compile a draft status report on the course
- to present to Steering Committee members the status report compiled by his/her committee. The chairman may delegate this task to one or two members of his/her committee.

4. Tasks of the Agency's Executive Office

Throughout the external assessment the Executive Office has the task of assisting the expert committee and making sure that everything runs smoothly.

Preparation

- to assist the chairman in constituting the expert committee
- to make all logistic arrangements for the visits in close collaboration with the chairman of the expert committee (preparation of the pre-visit meetings, fixing timetables, contacting all parties involved, arranging travel, booking hotels, etc.);
- to arrange a meeting with the committee chairman to prepare the pre-visit meetings
- to prepare and conduct, in collaboration with the chairman, the preparatory meeting of the expert committee ("E-Day")
- to take part in the preparatory meetings preceding each site visit (included in the fixed programme)

²⁴ Assessment table suggested by the Agency

Visit to the HEI

- together with the expert committee chairman and other members, to make sure that all items (as fixed at the end of the pre-visit meetings between the committee chairman and the HEIs and supplemented through the contacts with the experts) are dealt with in each visit and in each interview
- to take minutes throughout all interviews
- to make sure all interview sessions run smoothly, and that all participants have the opportunity to express their point of view (ensuring objectivity and that all HEIs are treated equally).

Compilation of the reports

- to provide logistic support to the chairman and all members of the expert committee when compiling the preliminary reports, the final summary reports and the status report
- to send out the reports to the recipients

List of performance indicators

CHAPTER 1 The institution's structure and governance

- 1.1. Presentation of the institution
- 1.2. Organisation and situation of the unit/department to be assessed
- 1.3. Description of the unit's internal organisation (role and function of the consultation and decision-making bodies)
- 1.4. Terms and conditions for student participation in decision-making and advisory bodies
- 1.5. The institution's partnerships
- 1.6. Organisation of quality assurance in the institution and unit/department: bodies and their responsibilities
- 1.7. Support from the institution's administrative department for the quality assurance process

CHAP 2 Structure and objectives of the study programme(s) assessed**2.1. Overall and specific objectives**

- 2.1.1. Definition and assessment of the overall and specific objectives of the study course(s) concerned, in relation to the institution's mission and overall objectives
- 2.1.2. Verification of the procedures for explaining and disseminating information to interested parties (staff and students)

2.2. Programme(s)

- 2.2.1. Procedure for designing a study programme according to the objectives listed under 2.1
- 2.2.2. Dependent on the individual programme, the interrelationship between research and teaching on the one hand and the professional world and teaching on the other hand
- 2.2.3. Overall structure of the programme in terms of basic knowledge, specialised knowledge and transferable personal skills
- 2.2.4. The teaching approach and encouragement for autonomous and permanent learning
- 2.2.5. The department's attitude towards student assessment: methods and frequency of assessments (oral or written exams, QCM, continuous assessment, etc.), relevance of the assessment system to programme objectives
- 2.2.6. educational objectives and how they are taken into account in projects, reports, end-of-course dissertations; organisation, monitoring and assessment
- 2.2.7. in the units/departments involved: educational objectives and how they are taken into account in work placement(s) (compulsory or recommended) or study periods abroad; organisation, monitoring and assessment
- 2.2.8. Universities: PhDs and PhD training; organisation, monitoring and assessment
- 2.2.9. Quality measurement: assessment of study programmes and teaching by students; assessment of course programmes by graduates and employers
- 2.2.10. Effects of quality assessments on the compilation and adaptation of course programmes

2.3. Information and the monitoring of learning progress

- 2.3.1. information for students on eligibility and enrolment criteria
- 2.3.2. Preparatory courses for the first year and participation rates
- 2.3.3. Information for students, at the different stages of their courses, on available choices, options and specialisation, optional courses, dissertations, tests, etc.
- 2.3.4. Measurement of the actual course workload (practical work, tutorials, exercises, projects, dissertations, etc.) for students
- 2.3.5. Information on the assessment of student knowledge
- 2.3.6. Promoting success: coaching, individual monitoring, remedial help, switching courses, and participation rates

CHAPTER 3 Target population of the study programme(s)

- 3.1. Overall context: student population of the French Community of Belgium, in the HEI and in the course
- 3.2. Qualitative and quantitative information on the recruitment, eligibility conditions, socio-demographic characteristics of student intake
- 3.3. Number of students (overall, new or repeaters) per academic year or department and per subject, option or specialisation
- 3.4. Quantitative analysis of study careers: "bridges" from other types of HEI, switching courses, etc.
- 3.5. Exam success rate per academic year or department and per subject, option or specialisation

- 3.6. Average study duration
- 3.7. Graduation rate
- 3.8. Career opportunities for graduates, by type of training (sectors, job quality, career paths, etc.
- 3.9. information on unemployment or under-employment (where available)
- 3.10. Job-finding support provided by the institution
- 3.11. Student support: new students, students from abroad, handicapped students, students with children, etc.
- 3.12. Living and study conditions for students: material facilities, quality of life, etc.

CHAPTER 4 Resources made available

4.1. Staff and HR management

- 4.1.1. Qualitative and quantitative data per discipline, specialty, etc. : Appropriate allocation of scientific and technical competences; full-time, part-time and outside staff; collaboration with other institutions, faculties, departments, sections, categories, services, etc.
- 4.1.2. Age and gender structure
- 4.1.3. Recruitment policy
- 4.1.4. Staff management (in the unit/department, within the institution): teacher training, further training, assessment and promotion policy, workload assessment, etc.
- 4.1.5. Effects of teaching quality assessments on staff policy

4.2. Resources and facilities

- 4.2.1. Operating and investment budgets
- 4.2.2. Classrooms, labs, libraries, IT infrastructure, etc.
- 4.2.3. Teaching tools
- 4.2.4. Extent to which resources and facilities match up to requirements

CHAPTER 5 External relations

5.1. Research

- 5.1.1. The department's research policy, main research topics, benefits for teaching
- 5.1.2. Participation in conferences
- 5.1.3. Research contracts, partners and funding sources:
 - with Belgian public authorities (federal, community, regional), EC, others;
 - with the socio-professional sector

5.2. Community service

- 5.2.1. Community service policy: priorities, benefits for teaching
- 5.2.2. expert reports, projects for popularising science, education and life-long learning programmes, etc.

5.3. National and international relations (not listed under other headings)

- 5.3.1. Student mobility: participation in exchange programmes, work placements, etc.

- 5.3.2. Mobility of academic and research staff: exchange agreements for teachers and researchers, invitations from abroad, participation in conferences and symposiums
- 5.3.3. Relations with various partners (collaboration projects, bilateral relations, cooperation projects with developing countries, companies, other public and private bodies, etc.)

CHAPTER 6 Strategic analysis and action plan

- 6.1. Analysis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis)**
- 6.2. Summary diagnosis based on the preceding factors**
- 6.3. Solutions envisaged or in the course of being drawn up for remedying identified weaknesses and threats.**

Annexes

- a. statistical information
- b. analysis of teaching content, covering all course descriptions. For each course, the number of hours per year or credits (including lectures, practical work, tutorials, personal work), the educational objective, the content, the manner of assessment and the teaching aids used
- c. list of members of staff, with their functions, their teaching tasks and other internal work
- d. list of end-of-course projects and dissertations for the last three years, together with the PhD theses for the last five years
- e. departmental rules of procedure (including exam regulations)
- f. other documents likely to benefit the report's content
- g. activity report or other strategic documents specific to the institution

Sample assessment contract

CONCLUDED

BETWEEN

The Agency for Assessing the Quality of Higher Education (AEQES) organised or subsidised by the French Community (hereinafter referred to as the "Agency for Quality Assurance", represented by its President, Mr./Ms. ;

AND

Mr./Ms.;

THE FOLLOWING IS AGREED:

Article 1 – Nature of the contract

This contract is a contract for services governed by the Law of 24 December 1993 relating to public works, supplies and services, the Royal Decree of 8 January 1996 and the Royal Decree of 26 September 1996 establishing general rules for the execution of public contracts and public works concessions.

This contract is awarded in accordance with the negotiated procedure set forth in Article 17 § 2 1 f) of the Law of December 24, 1993.

Article 2 – Purpose

In the context of its work assessing the quality of higher education in the French Community, the Quality Assurance Agency hereby commissions Mr./Ms. to carry out the external quality assessment of the course ".....".

Mr./Ms. shall chair/shall be a member of the expert committee appointed for this assessment work.

Article 3 - Details of the assessment work

§ 1 The assessment of the course concerned shall be performed in the context of an external review carried out by an expert committee in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in Articles 11, 16 and 20 of the Decree of 22 February 2008 on various measures relating to the organisation and functioning of the Agency for Assessing the Quality of Higher Education organised or subsidised by the French Community, attached in Annex 1

The experts are to fulfil the following tasks:

- a. to subject the analysis and conclusions contained in the self-assessment report to an external review. This is to be done before the expert committee conducts its site visit
- b. to attest that the description contained in the report matches their findings
- c. to examine how the resources described in the report match the needs
- d. to assess to what extent the objectives described in the report have been achieved

- e. to give an opinion on the relevance and feasibility of the proposed action plan
- f. to provide any useful recommendations

§ 2 The assessment of the course concerned shall be performed at the higher education institutions offering the course, and shall consist of, for each institution visited,:

- a. reading beforehand the self-assessment reports compiled prior to the expert committee's site visit;
- b. for the committee chairman, a 2-hour pre-visit meeting;

Between the chairman's pre-visit meeting and the committee's visits, a preparatory meeting will be held at the Agency.

Then, in the course of an inspection visit lasting two (2) or three (3) days at a maximum, the following is to be performed:

- c. a study of the results of the internal assessment
- d. a study of the institution's internal documents, relating both to the institution overall (study regulations, etc.) and specifically to the course concerned (teaching aids, how assessments are carried out, etc.);
- e. interviews with:
 - i. the heads of the institution
 - ii. the internal assessment coordinator and commission
 - iii. members of the various staff categories
 - iv. students belonging to different years
 - v. former students/graduates of the institution
 - vi. partners coming from the professional world (employers, work placement supervisors)
- f. for the committee chairman, the oral presentation of findings (ca. 30 minutes) at the end of second assessment day, This presentation, given on behalf of the expert committee, can be seen as a precursor to the preliminary report.

§ 3 As foreseen in Articles 3, 17 & 20 of the Decree and as to be found in Annex 1 of this contract, the assessment leads to the compilation:

- a. of a confidential preliminary report (in French) for each institution, containing a SWOT analysis and a list of recommendations. This report is written exclusively for the management of the institution concerned. It is sent to the latter via the AEQES Executive Office
- b. a final summary report for each institution assessed, written in French and in accordance with the provisions of the AGCF of 19 December 2008 (cf. Annex 2). This is sent to the AEQES Executive Office for publication on the Agency's website
- c. a report on the status of the course in the French Community, written in French and consisting of a contextualised presentation of the course offering as a whole and its outcomes. It lists the strengths, weaknesses/opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the assessed course and comes up with recommendations. This status report is sent to the Agency's Executive Office.

§ 4 The chairman of the expert committee, on behalf of committee members and in consensus with them, is responsible for submitting the reports foreseen in Articles 17 & 20 of the Decree within two (2) months of the end of the final site visit. He is assisted in this task by the Agency's Executive Office.

§ 5 The composition of the expert committee containing the business contact data of each expert, along with the provisional timetable for the assessment visits to the institutions involved in the assessment procedure are included in Annex 3 of this contract.

§ 6 Instructions for the experts regarding the methodology used, together with a document explaining the education system in Belgium's French Community, are included in Annex 4 of this contract.

Article 4 – Confidentiality

Pursuant to the ethics code, the expert undertakes to guard the confidentiality of all information (s)he may receive, as well as the contents of any confidential or restricted-use documents which (s)he needs to consult for the purpose of his/her duties or in the execution thereof.

Article 5 – Copyrights, reports, publications

The reports compiled by the expert committee in accordance with Articles 17 & 20 of the Decree (cf. Annex 1) become the property of the French Community.

Expert committee members shall yield to the French Community all intellectual property rights to the assessment which they have been requested to perform.

The intellectual property rights yielded involve the right of reproduction and communication (i.e. the right to produce any number of copies of the reports by whatever technical means and on whatever medium seen fit and to disseminate the copies by whatever method of communication seen fit).

Should fundamental modifications need to be made to the reports, these are to be explicitly checked by the authors.

Intellectual property rights are yielded for the whole copyright period,²⁵ beginning with the publication of the reports on the Agency's website and throughout the world.

These rights include the right to have the reports translated.

Compensation for this yielding of rights is part of the fee paid by the French Community in execution of Article 6.

The authors guarantee to be the owners of the yielded rights and that the reports are not compiled in contravention of the rights of any third party.

Article 6 - Details of payment for assessment missions

§ 1 The services of Mr./Ms. will be paid as follows:

1) An allowance of EUR 350 gross (for the chairman) or EUR 175 gross (for the other experts) per half-day for site visits (allowance covers a visit not exceeding two (2) days). The fee is paid as a lump sum.

Any additional work requested by the Agency and necessary for ensuring the success of its mission shall be paid under the terms and conditions set forth under 1)

The maximum number of additional days is fixed at two/four (dependent on the number of institutions visited).

The fees paid are not subject to a tax declaration in Belgium. Any non-Belgian expert is responsible for complying with the tax legislation of his country of residence.

Fees will be paid into the following account: in the name of

²⁵ Article 2 § 2 of the Law of 30 June 1994 on copyrights and associated rights

2) The following travel costs will be paid:

- i. the fare of a two-way rail ticket (first-class) when the distance between the expert's place of residence and Brussels is less than five hundred (500) kilometres
- ii. the fare of a return plane ticket (economy class, business class when economy is not available), when the distance between the expert's place of residence and Brussels is more than five hundred (500) kilometres
- iii. any travel within the French Community by rail (first-class) and/or car as needed for carrying out the work, at the Agency's choice
- iv. Journeys by car are reimbursed at the rate in effect in the French Community.

The expert is responsible for making all his/her own travel arrangements.

AEQES takes responsibility for arranging accommodation in close consultation with the chairman of the expert committee.

3) Accommodation costs directly associated with site visits are paid as follows:

- i. a single room in a 3- or 4-star hotel close to the institution to be inspected
- ii. An evening meal - on presentation of a bill showing the VAT (up to a maximum of EUR 40)

All other expenses are to be borne by the expert.

When the expert is accompanied by one or more people not directly associated with the task in hand, the expenses of the latter cannot be reimbursed by the Agency.

§ 2 The contracting party undertakes to have suitable insurance protection for the duration of the assessment work.

Article 7 – Budget allocation

Fees, travel and accommodation costs come out of the AEQES budget.

Article 8 – Payment of fees and expenses

Payment of the expert's fees will be made after receipt of the reports referred to in Articles 17 and 20 of the Decree at the end of the assessment mission, on presentation of a claim for expenses as prescribed by AEQES (cf. Annex 5). This claim, dated and signed under the handwritten words "certifié sincère et véritable à la somme de (certified true and correct to the sum of) (amount in words) is to be submitted in duplicate to the AEQES Executive Office.

Reimbursement of the expert's travel costs is made as and when the expert presents an expense claim on an AEQES form (cf. Annex 5) and with all original receipts attached.

Claims will be settled within 50 calendar days of receipt.

Article 9 – Jurisdiction

Any dispute between the contracting parties relating to this contract comes under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Brussels Courts.

Article 10 - Starting and ending date of the contract

This contract enters into force on the day it is signed and ends at the end of the assessment procedure concerned.

Article 11 – Miscellaneous

The provisions of this contract may only be amended by a supplementary agreement, or written in lieu thereof, duly approved by the contracting parties.

In signing this contract, the expert accepts the contents thereof and confirms having read the *Guide for Experts* (2008 decree - updated version)

Three signed copies of the agreement exist, one for each of the contracting parties and one for the AEQES accounting department

The contracting party,	On behalf of AEQES	
	The President of the Agency,	The AEQES Financial Officer
Place of signing: _____	Place of signing _____	Place of signing _____
Date of signing: _____	Date of signing _____	Date of signing _____

Contents of a potential expert's ID file

1. Section reserved for the Council (HEC)

The Council hereby nominates Mr./Ms. ²⁶
 as a potential

peer expert
 business expert
 educationalist (optional)

for the assessment by AEQES of the course in application of the decree of the French Community of Belgium of 22 February 2004

The expert nominated is capable of taking on the role of committee chairman yes
 no

Remarks:

.....

Place of signing, Date of signing

Name, position and signature

2. Section reserved for AEQES

Opinion of the Agency:

Remarks (optional):

Date:

Name, position and signature

Sections 3 - 7 are to be filled in by the potential expert.

3. Contact data of the potential expert

Name	
------	--

²⁶ Cross out where not applicable

Forename	
Private address	
Business address	
Telephone	
GSM	
Fax	
E-mail	
Date of birth	

4. Business data

Current position	Professional status	
	Employer	
	Title/function	
Are you semi-retired or retired	<input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> yes If yes, since when	
Degree(s), institutions awarding them and year obtained		
Business references (name and telephone number)		

<p>Have you been associated with any teaching or research in one of the institutions to be assessed over the last ten years?²⁷ ?</p> <p>If yes, please provide details</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> yes:
<p>Do you work in a teaching /management capacity in a Belgian higher education institution? If, yes, please provide details</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> yes:

5. Experience in quality assessment

- **In assessment terms**

<p>Have you already been a member of an education assessment panel?</p> <p>If, yes, please provide details</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> yes:
<p>Are you a member of a quality assurance agency belonging to the ENQA network?</p> <p>If yes, which?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> yes:
<p>Have you (had) any management responsibility in the field of quality assurance and/or teaching assessment?</p> <p>If, yes, please provide details</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> yes:
<p>Have you been involved in setting up quality assurance procedures in your institution?</p> <p>If, yes, please provide details</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> yes:

- **In terms of expertise**

<p>Description of your teaching expertise in the field to be assessed (peer expert)</p>
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²⁷ The list of the institutions involved in the assessment of the specific course can be found on the Agency's website www.aeges.be

	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>Description of your knowledge of the profession (business expert)</p>	<p>.....</p>
<p>Description of your expertise in education and pedagogy (educationalist)</p>	<p>.....</p>

6. For experts whose native language is not French

How do you rate your proficiency in French?²⁸ ?

Please check the right-hand box matching your level of French.

Experienced user	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations.	
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.	
Independent user	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.	
Basic user	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.	
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.	

Remarks (optional):

.....

.....

.....

²⁸ Table taken from the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR)
 For more information, <http://www.coe.int> - please refer to the section "CEFR and associated documents"

7. Motivation:

8. Agreement in principle and declaration of independence

I, the undersigned agree in principle to take part in the assessment of the course
in the French Community of Belgium.

I hereby certify that I am completely independent of the institutions evaluated²⁹.

Place of signing, date of signing

Signature

²⁹ The list of the institutions involved in the assessment of the specific course can be found on the Agency's website www.aeges.be

Sample programme for a site visit

SITE VISIT PROGRAMME³⁰

Day 1:

Time	Item
08:00 - 09:30	Working breakfast between the expert committee and the Agency's Executive Office.
10:00 - 10:45	Presentation of the self-assessment phase by the QA coordinator.
10:45 - 11:30	Meeting with academic staff (Group 1).
11:30 - 12:15	Debriefing and study of course syllabi, teaching material, questions and written responses to exams, the digital campus, etc.
12:15 - 13:00	Meeting with academic staff (group 2).
13:00 - 13:45	Lunch
13:45 - 14:15	Inspection of facilities (lecture theatres, IT, library, labs, etc.).
14:15 - 15:00	Meeting with students (Group 1)
15:00 - 15:45	Debriefing and study of course syllabi, teaching material, questions and written responses to exams, etc.
15:45 - 16:30	Meeting with students (group 2).
16:30 - 17:15	Meeting with former students
17:15 - 18:00	Meeting with employers

Day 2:

Time	Item
08:30 - 09:30	Working breakfast between the expert committee and the Agency's Executive Office.
10:00 - 10:45	Meeting with academic staff (group 3).
10:45 - 11:30	Meetings with administrative and technical staff.
11:30 - 12:15	Debriefing and study of course syllabi, teaching material, questions and written responses to exams, etc.
12:15 - 12:45	Meeting with management
12:45 - 13:30	Lunch
13:30 - 16:00	Working meeting between the experts and the Agency's Executive Office.
16:00 - 16:30	Oral report by the chairman of the expert committee.

³⁰ May be adapted dependent on the course to be assessed

Academic authorities: bodies which, in each institution, are entitled to exercise the responsibilities related to the organisation of education assigned to them by decree (see Decree of 31 March 2004).

Accreditation: quality assessment procedure for the purpose of approving a study programme (programme accreditation) or an institution (institution accreditation) by a non-governmental body of experts or a managing authority.

Agence pour l'Évaluation de la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur / Agency for Assessing the Quality of Higher Education (Agency or AEQES): the agency responsible for assessing the quality of higher education courses offered in the French Community of Belgium. The agency is fully autonomous, without having any separate legal status. Its budget and finances are managed separately from those of the French Community's general administration departments.

Coordinator: the person responsible for setting up the quality assurance system within an institution (the institution's QA coordinator).

Coordinator: the person designated by the institution to be assessed for coordinating the self-assessment process.

Councils: the five Higher Education Councils (or HECs) in the French Community of Belgium. Le Conseil Interuniversitaire de la Communauté française (CIUF) (*the Inter-University Council of the French Community*), le Conseil Général des Hautes Ecoles (CGHE) (*The General Council of the Hautes Ecoles*), le Conseil Supérieur de l'Enseignement Supérieur Artistique (CSESA) (*the Upper Council of Higher Arts Education*), le Conseil Supérieur de l'Enseignement de Promotion Sociale (CSEPS) (*the Upper Council of Adult Education*) et le Conseil Supérieur de l'Enseignement de l'Architecture (CSEA) (*the Upper Council of Architecture*).

ECTS (European Credit Transfer System): unit of measure corresponding to the time spent by a student within his study course on a learning activity within a specific discipline. A credit corresponds to 24 hours of learning activities. This workload is only partly devoted to the teaching offered by the institution. It also includes other related work, such as personal work, preparation, studies, projects, desk research, exams, etc.¹⁵

EHES: the European Higher Education Space

ENQA: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (since 2004), previously called the European Network for Quality Assurance.

EQAR: European Quality Assurance Register

ESU: ex-ESIB: National Unions of Students in Europe

EUA: European University Association

EURASHE: European Association of Institutions in Higher Education

¹⁵ Decree of 31 March 2004 defining higher education, promoting its integration into the European Higher Education Area and refinancing the universities (Article 6, §1)

Executive Office: The AEQES body responsible for implementing the decisions taken by the Steering Committee and the Secretariat. The Executive Office consists of a head of department, two or three Level 1 employees and two Level 2 employees.

Expert committee (or committee of external experts or committee): committee composed of external experts selected by the Agency's Steering Committee on the basis of proposals put forward by the Higher Education Councils to undertake the external assessment. For each course, such a committee consists of at least three representatives from the academic world and one representative from the business world, headed by a chairman.

External assessment: assessment carried out by an expert committee on the basis of the institution's self-assessment report.

Final summary report (or summary report): report containing the information gathered by the expert committee with regard to the set list of performance indicators and including any comments/observations of the academic authorities concerned.

Institutions: institutions offering higher education (HEIs) as set forth in the Decree of 31 March 2004. According to the study sector for which they are accredited, the institutions are either universities, an Haute Ecole, a higher art college, a school of architecture or a university academy. They may also be an adult education institution offering degrees equivalent to those awarded by full-time institutions.

Internal assessment (or self-assessment): critical self-assessment of the teaching carried out by an institution and written down in a confidential report (the self-assessment report) for the external expert committee.

Internal assessment commission (Commission): commission set up by the institution for the purpose of conducting the internal assessment and compiling the self-assessment report. Apart from the coordinator, this commission consists of members coming from different branches of the unit assessed: academic, research, administrative and technical staff and students.

Preliminary report: report written by the expert committee and sent exclusively to the academic authority of the institution involved at the end of all site visits. It consists of a SWOT analysis followed by recommendations.

Reference list of performance indicators (or list of performance indicators): list covering all aspects to be considered when compiling the self-assessment report. It is annexed to the Decree of 22 February 2008 and may, on the suggestion of a/the Council(s), be adapted for each course concerned. This list is set down in the Government Decree of the French Community (AGCF) of 11 April 2008.

Self-assessment report (or internal assessment report): Confidential report, written for the expert committee by the internal assessment commission on the basis of the set reference list of performance indicators. This report covers the overall context of the Institution and the system of quality assurance used in the unit/department to be assessed and in the institution concerned. This report provides a complete critical self-assessment of teaching via a SWOT analysis, identifying any aspects in need of improvement (strategic analysis and action plan)

Steering Committee: the Agency's decision-making body consists of 25 full members with voting rights (and their deputies) coming mainly from the various branches of higher education.

System-wide analysis: an analysis consisting of a contextualised presentation of the course offering and its outcomes in the French Community of Belgium. It lists the strengths and items requiring improvement, supplemented by a list of recommendations targeting the various stakeholders in higher education.

**Agence pour l'évaluation de la Qualité
de l'enseignement supérieur**

Rue Adolphe Lavallée 1 - 5th floor
B- 1080 Brussels
www.aeges.be

Responsable: C. Duykaerts
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