



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

QUALITY HANDBOOK

Version 4
Last update: November 2020

**Agence pour l'évaluation de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur
[Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education]
16 Avenue du Port– 1080 Brussels**

www.aeqes.be

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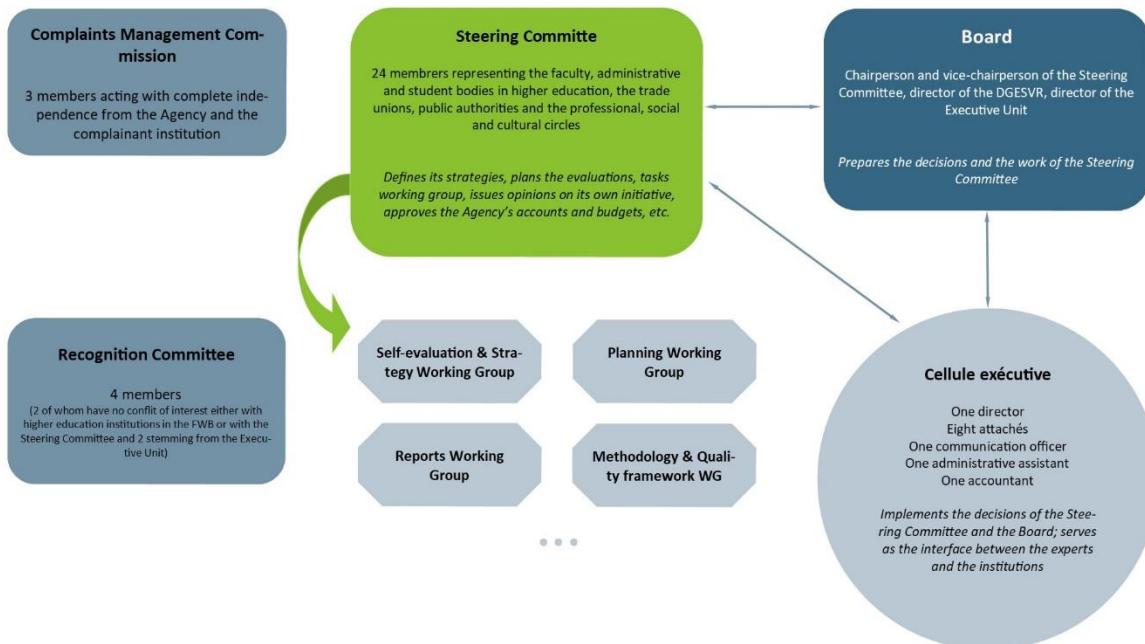
Foreword

The legislator has entrusted the AEQES with the role of supporting the development of a quality culture (quality enhancement) in higher education institutions (HEI) and of communicating the results of external evaluations carried out by expert committees (accountability).

Through the fields of analysis established in the reference framework for the initial and continuous evaluation of programmes, the Agency's code of ethics and its external evaluation methodologies, The AEQES is fully in line with the spirit of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG–2015). The ESGs are an integral part of the AEQES quality management system and its constituent operating processes and procedures.

The planning of evaluations of undergraduate and postgraduate courses (certificates, bachelor's degrees and master's degrees) is carried out in six-year cycles, including a mid-term review; the forms of education via the *Académie de Recherche et d'Enseignement Supérieur* (ARES) [Academy for Research and Higher Education] are involved in the planning of evaluations. The Agency includes representatives of HEIs, trade union delegations, students and representatives of socio-cultural and professional circles. The representative of the Directorate General Higher Education for Life Long Learning and Scientific Research of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation sits in an advisory capacity. The Steering Committee tasks various working groups to examine the themes of its discussion in greater depth and to inform its decision-making. By participating in the debates of the AEQES Steering Committee, all stakeholders are consequently involved in its strategic choices.

Agency Organization Chart



1 Why a Quality Handbook?

The purpose of the AEQES Quality Handbook is to describe its quality management system.

In compliance with the legislative framework of the *Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles* (FWB) [Wallonia-Brussels Federation]¹ and in light of the ESG, it has the dual objective of

- supporting the process of constant improvement of its activities (quality enhancement),
- guaranteeing a fair treatment for each HEI of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation through transparent procedures (accountability).

It is intended for the members of the Steering Committee, the staff of the Executive Unit, the HEIs, the experts and all the stakeholders of the AEQES.² It is disseminated through the Agency's website.

2 What does this Quality Handbook contain?

The quality management system of the AEQES is described by mapping the key processes. Each process is then broken down into a series of procedures.

The four main key processes identified are:

i. the MANAGEMENT process

As the decision-making body, the AEQES Steering Committee sets the Agency's strategic objectives, plans evaluations, sets up and tasks working groups, defines its communication policy and guides its partnership policy, approves the budget and endorses key strategic and methodological documents (working group reports, biennial activity report, five-year self-evaluation report, reference framework, case law of the Expert Commission, any opinion produced on its own initiative or upon request, etc.). These various procedures are listed under the code MA.

ii. the QUALITY MANAGEMENT process

In order to define, ensure and improve the quality and integrity of its activities, the Agency has developed a quality management system, the main procedures of which are listed under the GQ code. These procedures describe how stakeholder satisfaction is measured, how corrective and preventive actions are taken (e.g. complaints management and handling of malfunctions), how the Agency conducts its self-evaluation and is periodically evaluated, how

¹ And more particularly:

- 22 FEBRUARY 2008 - Decree on various measures relating to the organisation and operation of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education organised or subsidised by the French-speaking Community. Annex to the decree of the Government of the French-speaking Community of 11 April 2008 establishing the evaluation frame of reference
- 6 NOVEMBER 2008 – Decree on the budgetary, financial and accounting management of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education organised or subsidised by the French-speaking Community
- 19 DECEMBER 2008 - Decree of the Government of the French-speaking Community setting the content of the final summary report of the evaluation of a programme of study in higher education for its publication and the methods of publication of the follow-up plan and its progress report
- 15 JULY 2010 - Decree laying down the terms and conditions for the cyclical external review of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- 25 JUNE 2015 - Decree of the Government of the French-speaking Community amending various provisions relating to higher education

² Specific guides are also produced for these actors.

it reports regularly on its activities, how compliance with the processing of personal data is ensured and how the service activities are managed.

iii. the SUPPORT process

This describes the various procedures implemented by the Executive Unit to ensure the smooth running of the Agency and its activities: secretariat and archiving, communication with stakeholders, maintenance of the website, document and legislative monitoring, management of human and material resources, accounting management, and evaluation logistics. They are listed under the code SU.

iv. the OPERATIONAL PROCESS

All the procedures under the code OP cover the various stages linked to the Agency's CORE mission, i.e. conducting external programmatic evaluations (initial and continuous). The operational process thus encompasses the actions carried out by the Executive Unit for the planning and preparation of the different phases of the evaluation with the HEIs and the selected experts: selection of experts; carrying out the visits by the expert committees; production, transmission and publication of the various reports resulting from the evaluation; carrying out the follow-up activities.

3 How does the Quality Handbook evolve?

The Quality Handbook was drawn up by the Executive Unit on the basis of the experience gained during the evaluations. It was approved by the Board and submitted to the AEQES Steering Committee for approval for the first time on 1 March 2011.

It is updated on a regular basis to reflect the development of the Agency's practices. This version incorporates in particular the:

- switch from 10-year planning to 6-year plans,
- implementation of continuous evaluations, which replace the alternation of initial and continuous evaluations
- implementation of the interim review between two external evaluations,
- compliance of the Agency's practices with the GDPR.

A future version of the Quality Handbook will include the methodological developments in progress under a pilot phase, which are not yet formalised here.³ In the same vein, the recent

³ As early as 2015, the Steering Committee set up a "Working Group on Perspectives" whose work resulted in the adoption of the report entitled "[Evaluation externe de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur en FWB: Proposition méthodologique basée sur une étude de pratiques internationales et sur l'analyse d'une large consultation](#)" [External evaluation of the quality of higher education in the FWB: Methodological proposal based on a study of international practices and on the analysis of a broad consultation] by the members of the Steering Committee in October 2017. On the basis of this report, the Government entrusted the AEQES with the task to "design and implement a pilot project for the external evaluation of the institutional component, and to submit an evaluation report on this pilot project to the Government no later than six months after its completion. [...] Its purpose is to define the planning of evaluations for the programmatic and institutional aspects, according to a new periodicity of 6 years. HEIs that have demonstrated that their quality system is effective may obtain exemption from the evaluation of their programmes by the Agency for a maximum period of six years" (Article 9a of the decree of 22 February 2008 on various measures relating to the organisation and operation of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education organised or subsidised by the French-speaking Community).

To render this pilot phase operational between 2019 and 2023, the Steering Committee set up two bodies: The Pilot Phase Steering Committee (CoPIL), whose mission is to ensure that the pilot phase runs smoothly, including its communication with stakeholders; and the Methodological Support Council (COM), composed of independent expert members of AEQES and of HEIs in the FWB, whose task is to provide advice and approval. The Steering

developments linked to the COVID crisis (in particular the introduction of virtual visits) do not appear in this version of the *Quality Manual* either.

Each revision is approved by the Steering Committee.

4 Chart of the processes



Committee also plans to establish an Appeals Commission (to deal with possible appeals from the global advice procedure)

In addition, a specific document has been produced and distributed to guide the implementation of this pilot phase ([Phase pilote AEQES: balises méthodologiques](#)) [AEQES pilot phase: methodological guidelines]. The methodological framework of the pilot experiment was left as open as possible however, with a view to co-construction.

A report will be drawn up at the end of the pilot phase which, if the institutional evaluation is confirmed, will make it possible to integrate the *ad hoc* procedures into a new version of this Quality Manual.

MANAGEMENT process

Procedure Sheet MA 01	
Definition, communication and evaluation of strategic objectives	<i>Date of approval: 1 March 2011</i> <i>Date of last revision: 30 November 2020</i>

Definition: Procedure by which the Steering Committee sets and regularly reviews its strategic objectives.

Objectives:

- Operationalise the missions entrusted to the AEQES by decree in clear and precise objectives,
- Evaluate the attainment of the objectives,
- Communicate to the stakeholders.

Bodies in charge: The Steering Committee and the Board.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Steering Committee draws up a five-year strategic plan based on the Agency's values after consulting stakeholders on their expectations;
- On the basis of this strategic plan, the Board draws up its annual action plan and presents it to the Steering Committee;
- The strategic plan is communicated to the stakeholders;
- The achievement of the strategic objectives is evaluated/measured regularly by the Steering Committee and the Board;
- The strategic objectives are revised when the end of the period approaches or as and when the Steering Committee considers it necessary.

Upstream procedures: N/A

Downstream procedures:

- Establishment of working groups (MA 03),
- Partnership policy (MA 04),
- Communication policy (MA 05).

Reference documents:

- Article 3 of the AEQES decree 2008,
- *Mission statement*,
- AEQES values,
- Previous strategic plan.
- Creation and monitoring of strategic objective achievement indicators

Documents to be produced: "XXXX-XXXX strategic plan" type document.

Procedure Sheet MA 02

Planning of programmatic evaluations

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes how the AEQES plans programmatic evaluations, making provision for possible clustering, and how it incorporates changes in the training landscape.

Objectives: Ensure evaluations at regular intervals, enable HEIs to plan their external evaluations, enable the ARES and its thematic chambers and ad hoc committees to plan the search for expert candidates, propose relevant clusters for system-wide analyses, enable the Agency to verify that the planning is in line with the human and material resources available, and to enable the Executive Unit to launch the evaluations.

Bodies in charge: The Steering Committee, the Executive Unit, the ARES.

Activities of the procedure:

a. Design of the 6-year plan

- During the academic year that will bring the first half of the six-year plan to a close (*i.e. currently 2025-2026*), the Executive Unit consults the ARES on the changes it wishes to introduce in the next evaluation plan (*i.e. the 2029-2035 plan*). These changes may concern groupings into clusters, updating the training offer (cf. *supra*), or any other proposal;
- The Executive Unit and the Planning Working Group examine the opinion of the ARES, consider taking into account the requests for changes made, take note of the satisfaction indicators listed below, list the points that raise problems and prepare a proposal;
- The Planning Working Group presents its proposal to the Steering Committee;
- When the changes to be made to the plan imply numerous adjustments for the HEIs by comparison with the opinion transmitted by the ARES, the draft plan retained is transmitted to the ARES for a new consultation and opinion;
- The working group meets as and when necessary to analyse and possibly integrate the suggestions made by ARES;
- The Agency's Steering Committee approves the six-year plan during the academic year that begins the second half of the current plan (*i.e. currently 2026-2027*);
- The Executive Unit publishes the approved plan on the Agency's website, communicates it to the ARES and apprises the quality coordinators of the HEIs of the changes.

b. Updates of the current planning

- Each year, pursuant to the cooperation agreement by and between the AEQES and the ARES, the latter communicates to the Executive Unit the updates of the training offer and an indication of how to integrate the new programmes into the evaluation plan;
 - o In the case of minor changes (change of name of a programme, etc.) which do not affect the planning from the HEIs' point of view, the Executive Unit integrates

- the changes into the evaluation plan and publishes an updated version on the Agency's website;
- In the event of more significant changes (integration of a new programme, revision of the frame of reference of an existing programme, etc.), the Executive Unit consults the Planning working Group, which submits an update proposal to the Steering Committee for approval.
- Each year, in March, The Executive Unit provides the Steering Committee with an "adjusted evaluation register" each year in March for year n+2, including the non-evaluation requests submitted by the HEIs (cf. Procedure OP 01);
- On this basis, the Steering Committee endorses that the human resources available in the Executive Unit to supervise the evaluations are adequate for the number of such evaluations to be carried out.

Upstream procedures: N/A

Downstream procedure: Triggering an evaluation (OP 01).

Reference document: Previous programmatic evaluation plan

Documents to be produced:

- New programmatic evaluation plan,
- Updated versions of programmatic evaluation plan,
- Explanatory note.

Procedure Sheet MA 03

Working Group setup and monitoring

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes how the Steering Committee tasks different working groups (WGs) to examine specific issues in greater depth.

Objectives: Examine in greater depth issues discussed by the Steering Committee, inform its decision-making, and ensure the involvement of stakeholders in the development of methodologies.

Bodies in charge: The Steering Committee, the Board.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Steering Committee entrusts a mission to a WG on the proposal of the Board or on its own initiative;
- The WG conducts a documentary research, analyses the elements gathered, draws up proposals and produces documents;
- The WG presents interim reports on its work during the plenary sessions of the Steering Committee, which enables the latter to specify the scope of the mission;
- Once approved by each WG, the minutes of the meetings are posted on the Agency's intranet and thus made available to all Steering Committee members;
 - o the minutes are approved at the next WG meeting or electronically when no subsequent meeting is scheduled;
 - o the member(s) of the Executive Unit in charge of the WG transmit(s) the approved minutes to the colleague(s) in charge of updating the website for publication on the intranet.
- The Steering Committee can create a new WG as and when necessary. It moreover updates the composition of the WGs on a regular basis, ensuring a balanced representation of the various stakeholders insofar as possible. Stakeholders from outside the Steering Committee may be invited to participate in the WGs so as to bring their expertise in the field to bear.

Upstream procedures: Definition, communication and evaluation of strategic objectives (MA 01)

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference documents: code of ethics

Documents to be produced: WG minutes and related documentation.

Procedure Sheet MA 04

Partnership policy	<i>Date of approval: 1 March 2011</i>
	<i>Date of last revision: 30 November 2020</i>

Definition: This procedure describes how the Agency implements its strategic objectives in terms of partnerships or participation in networks.

Objectives: Develop a space of trust and mutual learning between the AEQES and other organisations so as to enrich its experience and know-how; act in synergy with other organisations by getting involved in the work and events carried out by partners and play a role in the unfolding trends in quality assurance; become the privileged interlocutor for quality assurance in higher education in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation; enhance the positioning of the Agency on a European and international scale.

Bodies in charge: The Board, the Steering Committee, the partners.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Board examines specific partnership opportunities/requests and ensures their relevance to the strategy established by the Agency as well as their feasibility;
- The Board selects the appropriate methods;
- The Steering Committee approves any cooperation agreement by and between the Agency and another organisation.

Upstream procedure: Definition, communication and evaluation of strategic objectives (MA 01).

Downstream procedure: N/A

Reference documents: N/A

Documents to be produced:

- Cooperation agreement.

Procedure Sheet MA 05

Communication policy

*Date of approval:
1 March 2011*

*Date of last revision:
30 November 2020*

Definition: This procedure describes how the Agency defines its communication policy in relation to its strategic objectives, and selects the various methods with which the Agency communicates with its stakeholders.

Objective: Enhance the value of the Agency's activities for its stakeholders.

Body in charge: The Steering Committee.

Activities of the procedure:

- The strategic plan defines the communication objectives;
- The Board analyses the proposals of the person in charge of communication in the Executive Unit, in relation to the objectives set by the strategic plan;
- The Executive Unit is responsible for organising events and producing or having tools and materials produced;
- The Steering Committee measures the impact of its communication policy and adjusts it as and where necessary.

Upstream procedure: Definition, communication and evaluation of strategic objectives (MA 01).

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference document: Strategic plan

Documents to be produced:

- Communication materials.
- Communication impact survey.

Procedure Sheet MA 06

Preparation of the work and decisions of the Steering Committee and support for the management of day-to-day operations

Date of approval:
30 November
2020

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes how the Board prepares the work and decisions of the Steering Committee and supports the Executive Unit in the day-to-day management of the Agency's operations.

Objective: Facilitate the Steering Committee's work and the smooth running of the Agency.

Body in charge: The Board.

Activities of the procedure:

a. Preparation of the Steering Committee's work and decisions

- The Board prepares the plenary meetings of the Steering Committee (agenda, documentation);
- On the basis of the Strategic Plan, the Board prepares an annual action plan and presents it to the Steering Committee (cf. Procedure MA 01);
- The Board evaluates the achievement of the Agency's strategic objectives annually and presents a progress report to the Steering Committee;
- The Board regularly evaluates the WG chart and proposes adaptations to the Steering Committee;
- The Board evaluates the requests for specific partnerships that the Agency receives, for which it prepares a file for the Steering Committee;
- The Board prepares, the draft annual budget together with accounting officer and validates the budget proposal to be submitted to the Steering Committee (cf. Procedure SU 06/1);

b. Support for the management of day-to-day operations

- The Board approves the human resources needs analysis for the Executive Unit (cf. Procedure MA 02) and is responsible for hiring staff by delegation of the Government,;
- If mediation in complaints or appeals proves unsuccessful, the Board decides and, where necessary, appeals to the Complaints or Appeals Commission (cf. Procedure GQ 02/1 or GQ 02/2);
- The Board ensures good cooperation with the ARES and updates the cooperation agreement as and when necessary (excluding annexes);
- The Board represents the AEQES in ad hoc meetings.

Upstream procedure: Definition, communication and evaluation of strategic objectives (MA 01).

Downstream procedures: Setting up WGs (MA 03), Partnership Policy (MA 04), Communication Policy (MA 05), Recurrent Decision Making (MA 07)

Reference documents:

- Articles 6 and 7 of the decree of 22 February 2008,
- Rules of Procedure of the Agency

Documents to be produced:

- Annual action plan and progress report,
- Agenda of the Steering Committee plenary sessions and documentation

Procedure Sheet MA 07

Recurrent decision-making

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes the frequency and purpose of decisions taken by the Steering Committee.

Objective: Ensure the smooth running of the Agency.

Body in charge: The Steering Committee.

Activities of the procedure:

The Steering Committee approves
annually:

- a) an updated version of the programmatic evaluation plan, where applicable (cf. Procedure MA 02),
- b) the evaluation register for year n+2 (see MA 02 procedure)
- c) the annual budget (draft budget, adjusted budget and closure of accounts) (cf. Procedure SU 06/1),

every two years:

- d) the election to the Chair and the Vice-Chair (cf. Procedure MA 07),
- e) the activity report (cf. Procedure GQ 03),

every five years:

- f) the Strategic Plan (cf. Procedure MA 01)
- g) the self-evaluation report and the progress report (cf. Procedure GQ 04),

every six years:

- h) the new programmatic evaluation plan (cf. Procedure MA 02),

as required:

- i) key strategic and methodological documents (WG reports, reference framework, partnership agreements, etc.)
- j) opinions issued on its own initiative or at the Government's request,
- k) amendments of the rules of procedure (rules of procedure of the Agency and rules of procedure of the Committee of Experts) and the case law of the Committee of experts.

Upstream procedures: cf. procedure concerned.

Downstream procedures: idem.

Reference document:

- Decree of 22 February 2008,
- Rules of procedure of the Agency.

Documents to be produced: cf. procedure concerned.

Procedure Sheet MA 08

Election to the chair and the vice-chair

Date of approval:
30 March 2010

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes the rules and procedures for the election to the chair and vice-chair of Agency, in accordance with the decree of 22 February 2008.

Objective: Ensure the proper functioning of the Steering Committee through the election to the chair and vice-chair.

Body in charge: The Steering Committee.

Activities of the procedure:

The election to the chair and vice-chair of the Agency is held every two years, in June, and for the first time under the procedure described here, on 1 June 2010.

An item entitled "election to the chair" immediately followed by an item entitled "election to the vice-chair" shall be included in the agenda that convenes the members of the AEQES Steering Committee for the meeting at which the election is to take place. All members and alternates designated in Article 5 (2) 2° to 5° of the decree of 28 February 2008 who were designated no later than 31 March of the year of the election shall be considered eligible.

Voting shall be by secret ballot. All members of the Agency with voting rights participate in the vote, namely full members or, in their absence, their alternates as designated by the Government decree determining the composition of the Agency.

If they are candidates, the current chairperson and vice-chairperson may not chair the meeting for the agenda item that concerns them. Thus, if the chairperson is a candidate for re-election, the item relating to the vote for the chair shall be chaired by the vice-chairperson. If the vice-chairperson is a candidate for the chair, the vote for the chair shall be chaired by the director general for higher education, lifelong learning and scientific research, a member of the Agency. In the absence of the director general, the oldest Steering Committee member present shall chair the meeting for this item, whether as a member or an alternate, provided that he is not a candidate for the position of chairperson.

Candidacies

- Candidacies for the position of chair and/or vice-chair shall be sent in writing to the chairperson of the Agency during the month of March preceding the election, together with a brief *curriculum vitae* highlighting the competences of the candidates in quality in higher education;
- The Executive Unit of the Agency shall acknowledge receipt of each candidacy in writing;
- If the current chairperson is a candidate, he or she shall send his letter of candidacy to the vice-chairperson;
- The closing date for filing candidacies is 31 March;
- After the closing date, the files of the candidates (letter and *curriculum vitae*) are sent to all members of the Steering Committee by the Agency's Executive Unit before 15 April;
- The Steering Committee validates the candidacies received in its May meeting;

Election procedure

- The election to the chair is by a simple majority of the members present (see below). The number and identity of those taking part in the ballot shall be read out by the chairperson designated for this item on the agenda, prior to deliberation thereon. Once the names have been read out, no other person shall be allowed to vote;
- A "simple majority of the members present" means 50% + 1 vote when the number of voters is even, more than 50% of the votes when the number of voters is odd;
- If no member obtains the required majority after three rounds of voting, a fourth round shall be held between the two candidates who obtained the most votes in the first three rounds;
- If the vote is tied in the fourth round or if neither candidate obtains a simple majority, a fifth and then a sixth round of voting shall be organised in accordance with the same procedure;
- If no one is elected the sixth round, the election shall be suspended. The Steering Committee shall be convened to a new meeting where the election to the chair and vice-chair shall be the only item the agenda. This new meeting shall be held within fourteen days of the first meeting;
- A new election shall be held at this second meeting and the chairperson elected shall be the person obtained the highest number of votes among the candidates, even if he or she does not get a simple majority;
- The election to the vice-chair shall take place in the same way as above, immediately after the closure of the vote for the chair;
- The Executive Unit of the Agency shall ensure the proper organisation of the ballots, under the direct supervision of its chief officer who must be particularly vigilant as to the list of candidates, the respect of deadlines, the identification of voters and the outcome of the voting. The voting process is recorded in the minutes of the Steering Committee meeting during which the voting operations took place;
- Where there is only one candidate for the chair or the vice-chair, the chairperson of the meeting shall item, ask the Steering Committee whether a secret ballot is necessary for that item. If a member of the Agency with voting rights so requires, the vote will be held. If this is not the case, the chairperson or the vice-chairperson shall be declared elected unanimously. The elected chairperson and vice-chairperson shall take office at the end of the plenary session.

Particular provisions

- In the event of resignation, physical inability to serve or death, an interim election shall be held for the position of chairperson or vice-chairperson as soon as the absence of the incumbent is established. The voting procedures are identical to those for an ordinary election;
- The chairperson or vice-chairperson thus elected completes the term of office of his predecessor. He or she is then eligible for a new term without renewal in the same position.

Upstream procedures: N/A

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference documents:

- decree of 22 February 2008,
- Rules of procedure of the Agency

Documents to be produced:

- Ballot papers,
- Minutes of the Steering Committee plenary sessions.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT process

Procedure Sheet GQ 01	Date of approval: 1 March 2011	Date of last revision: 30 November 2020
Collection and processing of information, feedback, and updating of procedures and materials		

Definition: This procedure reviews the various mechanisms in place for collecting relevant information from stakeholders and processing it to provide feedback and to update procedures and materials as and where necessary.

Objectives:

- Measure the impact of the evaluation mechanisms and their ownership,
- Collect suggestions for improving practices and make the necessary adjustments,
- Report back to the different stakeholders involved in the evaluation.

Bodies in charge: The Executive Unit, the Board, the Steering Committee and the stakeholders of the agency.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Executive Unit puts in place various mechanisms for collecting anonymous and confidential feedback, in particular by means of satisfaction questionnaires for the HEIs evaluated (management, quality coordinators, teaching, administrative and technical staff, students) and for the expert evaluation panels;
- The Executive Unit sends these questionnaires to the various recipients
 - o At the end of the initial evaluation visit, for the various stakeholders of the HEIs that participated in an interview with the committee of experts (cf. Procedure OP 04);
 - o When the evaluation reports are published (cf. Procedure OP 05), for the experts, participants in continuous evaluations and participants in initial evaluations (for the latter, this is the follow-up to the survey sent after the visit);
- The Executive Unit compiles the results of the surveys into overviews and produces a summary;
- The Executive Unit guarantees the anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of their answers through these different processes;
- The Executive Unit reports on the summarized results of these surveys to the Steering Committee;
- The Executive Unit informs the people concerned of the summarized results of its surveys;
- Depending on the results, minor adjustments to the methodology are made by the Executive Unit. For major adjustments to be made, the Executive Unit refers to the Board and the Steering Committee.

Upstream procedures: All operational procedures (from OP 01 to OP 07).

Downstream procedures: N/A

Documents to be produced:

- Questionnaires for HEIs,
- Questionnaires for expert evaluation panels,
- Overviews,
- Compilation and annual analysis of survey results.

Procedure Sheet GQ 02

Complaints management

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
5 January 2016

Definition: This procedure describes the recording and handling of complaints lodged by an HEI with the Agency.

Objectives:

- Ensure consistency in the application of the methodology and fairness of treatment between all HEIs,
- Manage the handling of complaints independently.

Bodies in charge: The Executive Unit, the Board, the Steering Committee and the Complaints Commission.

Activities of the procedure:

A complaint is considered admissible when it:

- pertains to non-compliance with the code of ethics, an evaluation procedure and/or the expert contract;
- is submitted, in writing, within 30 calendar days of the alleged offence;
- is based on facts and is documented;
- is signed by the highest authority of the HEI;
- pertains to an identified element of the evaluation procedure.

For any point relating to an evaluation result, the HEI is invited to avail itself of its right of reply (cf. Procedure OP 05).

When a complaint is lodged with the Agency, the following levels of processing are provided in succession:

- The Executive Unit acknowledges receipt of the complaint and mediates with the HEI;
- If mediation fails, the matter is brought before the Board, which decides on the follow-up:
 - o The Board proposes a solution to the HEI.
If the solution proposed by the Board does not meet with the HEI's approval, the HEI may refer the matter to the Agency's Complaints Management within 15 calendar days (excluding school holidays) of the Board's proposal; or
 - o The Board decides on its own initiative to appeal to the Agency's Complaints Commission.

The Complaints Commission is composed of three members: one appointed by the complainant HEI, one appointed by the Steering Committee and one appointed jointly by these two people. The members of the Complaints Commission have no connection with the HEI lodging the complaint and do not sit on the Agency's Steering Committee.

The composition of the Complaints Commission shall be endorsed by the Steering Committee and communicated to the HEI within 45 calendar days (excluding holiday periods) as of the lodging of the complaint.

The HEI has 10 working days to report any conflict of interest to the members of the Complaints Commission.

The people serving on the Complaints Commission collectively have the following capacities and skills:

- A sound knowledge of the higher education system in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation,
- A thorough and nuanced understanding of quality systems in higher education HEIs,
- Experience in the evaluation of programmes, systems or HEIs.

A member of the Executive Unit acts as the secretary of the Complaints Commission. The person from the Executive Unit who guided or coordinated the evaluation process that is the subject of the complaint may not serve as secretary.

The Complaints Commission investigates the case and determines the follow-up for the complaint. Its decision is communicated by the Commission's secretary to the HEI no later than three months after the complaint was lodged (excluding holiday periods).

Upstream procedure: N/A

Downstream procedure: N/A.

Reference documents:

- Code of ethics,
- Expert contract,
- Procedure concerned by the complaint (OP 01 to OP 07),
- Guide for HEIs,
- Rules of Procedure of the Complaints Commission.

Documents to be produced:

- Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint,
- Convening of the meeting of the Complaints Commission, if applicable,
- Minutes of the meeting of the Complaints Commission, if applicable.

Procedure Sheet GQ 03

Accountability and continuous improvement

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes how the AEQES reports on its activities.

Objectives: Report on the Agency's activities on a regular basis.

Body in charge: The Steering Committee, the Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Executive Unit draws up the activity report for a period of two years (June of year n - June of year n+2), corresponding to a term of office of the chair and vice-chair;
- The activity report is approved by the Steering Committee;
- The activity report is then disseminated widely to the Agency's partners, in particular by being posted on | the Agency's website.

Upstream procedures: All OP procedures

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference documents: Article 23 of the AEQES 2008 decree and AGCF [decree of the Government of the French-speaking Community] of 15 July 2010.

Documents to be produced:

- Biennial activity report.

Procedure Sheet GQ 04

External evaluation of the Agency

Date of approval:
30 November
2020

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes how the AEQES conducts its self-evaluation, ensures that it is regularly evaluated externally in a process of continuous improvement and visibility, and follows up the evaluation.

Objectives: The positive outcome of the external evaluation enables the Agency to renew its membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and to be included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), and to be part of a continuous improvement process.

Body in charge: The Steering Committee.

Activities of the procedure:

- Pursuant to Article 21 of the AEQES decree and the AGCF of 15 July 2010, as well as the rules of the ENQA and the EQAR, the Agency is evaluated every five years. This evaluation includes a self-evaluation phase and an external evaluation phase. The latter results in a report produced by the expert evaluation panel tasked by the ENQA;
- The Director of the Executive Unit and the Chairperson of the Agency approve the Terms of Reference⁴ with the ENQA and submit the request for renewal of the registration to the EQAR;
- The Steering Committee tasks the Self-Evaluation and Strategy WG to draw up a self-evaluation file;
- Once approved by the Steering Committee, the self-evaluation file is posted on the Agency's website, translated into English and sent to the ENQA;
- The Self-Evaluation and Strategy WG organises the visit (proposed schedule and invitation of participants) and ensures that it goes smoothly;
- After the visit by the committee tasked by the ENQA, a preliminary report is sent to the Executive Unit. The latter communicates the report to the members of the Self-Evaluation and Strategy WG, who exercise the right of reply;
- The ENQA then forwards the Board's letter with its decision (renewal of membership or not) to the Executive Unit and posts the Agency's evaluation report and decision on its website;
- The external evaluation report is communicated to the Self-evaluation and Strategy WG, the Steering Committee, the Government and the Parliament of the French-speaking Community. It is also posted on the Agency's website;
- The Agency ensures the follow-up of the evaluation (action plan, interim report, etc.);

Upstream procedures: Definition, communication and evaluation of strategic objectives (MA 01)

Downstream procedures: N/A

⁴ Contract that sets out the terms and conditions of the evaluation

Reference documents:

- Article 23 of the AEQES 2008 decree and AGCF of 15 July 2010
- ESG 2015.

Documents to be produced / completed:

- *Terms of reference* of the ENQA,
- Self-evaluation report,
- Interim report and action plan.

Procedure Sheet GQ 05

Processing of personal data

Date of approval:
30 November
2020

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes how the AEQES ensures compliance of personal data processing with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Objectives: Ensure that the processing of personal data is compliant with the GDPR.

Bodies in charge: The Executive Unit, the data protection officer of the Ministry of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the controller.

Activities of the procedure:

In the absence of legal personality, the AEQES follows the instructions of the Ministry of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation on the processing of personal data:

- The Executive Unit completes the tools put in place by the Ministry of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (MFWB) which provide in particular:
 - o Information on the context of the collection;
 - o Information on the agent in charge of the processing;
 - o Information on the processing (in particular the type, purpose, basis, categories of data concerned, possible recipients, storage periods, security measures);
- The Executive Unit ensures that the data is processed in accordance with these tools and, if necessary, submits proposals for updating to the Data Protection Officer;
- Any incident is reported as soon as possible to the Data Protection Officer

Upstream procedures: N/A

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference documents:

- General Data Protection Regulation
- MFWB documentation

Documents to be produced:

- Personal data processing sheets

Procedure Sheet GQ 06

Management of the Executive Unit's activities

Date of approval:
30 November
2020

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes how the Executive Unit manages its activities.

Objectives: Organise and coordinate the Unit's activities according to the means and human resources available and ensure that the deadlines are met.

Bodies in charge: the management of the Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

- Plan and prioritise activities,
- Distribute the workload as best as possible among the Unit's staff and determine the responsibilities of each, in particular the:
 - o Coordination of evaluation campaigns,
 - o Secretariat and follow-up of the WGs,
- Ensure the follow-up and the continuity of the service,
- Organise information, professional development, sharing and listening sessions:
 - o Weekly team meetings are held to follow-up, share information and manage imponderables,
 - o The annual review is conducted to examine the Unit's operability in depth based on feedback and information from stakeholders (cf. Procedure GQ 01); the Executive Unit analyses all the stages of the evaluation cycle that is ending and points out the good practices to be consolidated as well as the points in need of improvement;
 - o The members of the Executive Unit participate in events related to quality assurance (cf. Procedure SU 04/1) and share their feedback with the members of the service during service meetings and, where appropriate, with the members of the Steering Committee.

Upstream procedure: Planning of evaluations (MA 02)

Downstream procedure: N/A

Reference documents:

- Code of ethics,
- Task description.

Documents to be produced:

- Timetable of activities for the year and those in charge;
- Minutes of service meetings (including minutes of training, participation in quality events, etc.
- Minutes of the annual review.

SUPPORT process

Procedure Sheet SU 01	
Secretariat and archiving	<i>Date of approval: 1 March 2011</i> <i>Date of last revision: 30 November 2020</i>

Definition: This procedure describes the various secretarial tasks of the Executive Unit.

Objectives:

- Ensure a rigorous archival storage of all decisions and reflections by the Agency,
- ensure that meetings run smoothly,
- Manage a user-friendly and effective daily communication.

Body in charge: The Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Executive Unit provides the secretariat for the plenary sessions of the Steering Committee and the various WGs (drafting, transmission and publication of the minutes on the intranet);
- The Executive Unit develops a secure and efficient archiving system for all its documents;
- The Executive Unit puts all incoming and outgoing mail on the indicator and has it validated by its management;
- The Executive Unit systematically replies to the various e-mails systematically and provides a telephone hotline;
- The Executive Unit keeps up to date a database with the professional contact details of the academic authorities of the HEIs and of the persons involved in quality management (coordinators, coordinators); it ensures that the management of these data complies with the GDPR;
- The Executive Unit plans the Agency's meetings and takes care of the logistics (booking rooms and ordering drinks).

Upstream procedures: N/A

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference documents: Article 7, decree of 22 February 2008.

Documents to be produced:

- Minutes of the various meetings and related documentation,
- Correspondence.

Procedure Sheet SU 02

Maintenance of the website

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure sets out the indispensable steps to ensure that the website www.aeqes.be is regularly updated.

Objectives: Provide the general public with regularly updated information on the Agency's activities and the members of the Steering Committee with easy access (via the intranet) to all relevant information.

Body in charge: The Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

In addition to the occasional update of elements that need to be integrated as they become available, the webmasters of the Agency's website ensure that the information received is updated on a regular basis.

1. “Agency” section

a. Composition

- i. Steering Committee: each time a ministerial decree is issued that changes the composition of the Steering Committee,
- ii. Board: at each new election,
- iii. Working Groups: permanent,
- iv. Other bodies: permanent.

b. Reference documents

- i. Legal references: each time a decree or an AGCF concerning the Agency is issued,
- ii. Documentation: each time a mission abroad is carried out (cf. Procedure SU 04/1), when new reference works and/or websites are published,
- iii. What they think...: each time a press article or parliamentary question concerning the Agency appears.

2. “Timetable” section

- a. Planning of evaluations: each time the Steering Committee updates the six-year plan for evaluations (Cf. Procedure MA 02),
- b. Timetable per programme: each year, when new evaluations are launched (cf. Procedure OP 01),
- c. “Quality” events: depending on the Agency's current situation.

3. “Reports” section: the “Evaluation reports (per HEI),” “System-wide analyses,” and “Studies and analyses” sections are to be updated as they are produced.

4. “Experts” section

- a. Committees per programme: every year, as and when expert evaluation panels are set up (Procedure MA 03/OP 03). The webmaster publishes the summary CVs of the selected experts. The summary CV is endorsed by the expert concerned before it is published.

5. “Practical information” section

- a. Useful documents: regularly.
- b. Frequently asked questions: regularly (in particular when launching new evaluation exercises and following service meetings aimed at improving implementation procedures by the Executive Unit).

6. “Members” section: Following meetings of the Steering Committee and Working Groups, the approved minutes are transmitted, for publication, to the persons responsible for the maintenance of the site by the members of the Executive Unit in charge of the WG.

The other arrangements for updating the website are:

- the issue will be put on the agenda of two weekly internal meetings of the Executive Unit,
- the complete screening of the website pages planned on a cyclical basis,
- the processing of feedback from users of the intranet and/or the website.

Upstream procedures:

- Planning of evaluations (MA 02),
- Communication policy (MA 05),
- Recurrent decision making (MA 06),
- Secretariat and archiving (SU 01),
- All operational procedures (OP 01 to 07).

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference documents: Article 18, decree of 22 February 2008.

Documents to be produced: Any published document.

Satisfaction and/or performance indicators:

- Website visit trends (number of visits, pages or sections visited, etc.),
- Stakeholder satisfaction rate (measured by surveys),
- Website updating frequency.

Procedure Sheet SU 03

Documentary and legislative monitoring

*Date of approval:
1 March 2011*

*Date of last revision:
30 November 2020*

Definition: This procedure describes the various documentary and legislative monitoring methods.

Objective: Provide experts on mission, HEIs of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and any interested person with an updated documentary base.

Body in charge: The Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Executive Unit ensures legislative monitoring (Parliament of the French-speaking Community, parliamentary questions, *Moniteur Belge* [Belgian Official Gazette]);
- The Executive Unit consults the press review compiled by the Ministry of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation;
- The Executive Unit builds up a bibliographic collection (themes: higher education, pedagogy, quality management);
- This documentary watch may include meetings with a targeted public (professional association for example).

Upstream procedures: N/A

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference documents: Bibliographic and sitographic directories.

Documents to be produced: Perhaps a summary of the information gathered. For the legislative monitoring, a summary table with the parliamentary questions relating to higher education and the answers given.

Procedure Sheet SU 04

Human resources management policy

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes the human resources management policy of the Executive Unit.

Objective: Ensure that the Executive Unit is run smoothly and that the skills of its members are honed continuously.

Bodies in charge: The Management of the Executive Unit and the Board.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Director of the Executive Unit draws up a statement of human resources needs analysis for the Agency's Strategic Plan, the planning of evaluations and other activities and the resources potentially available for hiring staff from its own resources;
- The Board approves this statement and takes the appropriate steps in case of recruitment needs;
- The Management of the Executive Unit carries out regular evaluations of the members of the Executive Unit and charts the needs in terms of further training together with each member;
- The Management of the Executive Unit and the staff member implement the appropriate training plan.

Upstream procedures:

- Definition, communication and evaluation of strategic objectives (MA 01),
- Planning of the evaluations (MA 02).

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference documents: Articles 22 and 23, decree of 22 February 2008.

Documents to be produced:

- Job profiles,
- Evaluation sheets for staff members

Procedure Sheet SU 04/1

Participation in quality events in Belgium or abroad

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure sets out the different stages and responsibilities when participating in a "quality" event.

Objectives: Represent the Wallonia-Brussels Federation at quality events in Belgium and abroad, bolster the Agency's knowledge and skills in matters relating to the quality of higher education and, finally, ensure the development of the network of relations and even meet potential experts.

Bodies in charge: the management of the Executive Unit and the Board.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Executive Unit keeps regularly abreast of the events organised:
The themes of focus will be:
 - o Quality in higher education (the European Quality Assurance Forum, seminars organised by international quality bodies such as ENQA, INQAAHE, EURASHE, EUA, presentation of monitoring tools and systems, etc.)
 - o Pedagogy in higher education (*learning outcomes, e-learning, etc.*),
 - o the Bologna reform and its implications.
- The management of the Executive Unit designates the member(s) of the Unit who will participate in the event in accordance with the provisional budget and informs the Board;
- The Board decides whether the presence of a member of the Steering Committee is desired. In such a case, the information is sent to the members by email or announced orally during one of the plenary meetings. The persons interested in the mission will give reasons for their request and the Board will issue a reasoned opinion designating the person to be tasked;
- If a member of the Executive Unit is tasked, he must complete the "Mission Order" form available on the intranet of the Ministry of the FWB. It is to be accompanied by a standard letter of request addressed to the department of international relations, via the management of the Executive Unit;
- The Executive Unit or the person tasked by it proceeds with the registration, the payment of any registration fees, and the reservation of the means of transport and accommodation;
- The person tasked in turn files a claim with the Executive Unit for reimbursement of the costs incurred for the mission. The costs covered by the Agency are as follows:
 - o any registration fees for the event;
 - o transport,
 - o accommodation
 - o local transport costs,
 - o per diems provided by the administration at the time of the stay.Any other costs incurred during the mission are to be borne by the person who attended the event;
- At the end of the event, the person tasked will write a report for the Steering Committee of the Agency, to be sent to the website maintenance team for publication where

necessary. The various materials distributed during the event will be deposited with the Executive Unit and made available to any member of the Steering Committee; The Board may ask the person tasked to present a summary of the topics of the event to the members of the Steering Committee during a plenary session.

Reference documents: Article 3, 7°, the decree of 22.02.2008.

Documents to be produced / completed:

- For members of the Executive Unit, a standard letter requesting authorisation and a "mission order" form,
- Statement of claim available on the Agency's intranet,
- Report of the event.⁵

⁵ Cf. reports already posted on the [Agency's website](#).

Procedure Sheet SU 05

Monitoring of material resources

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure goes over the necessary steps for acquiring material resources.

Objectives:

- Ensure the proper management and operation of the service in terms of material resources,
- Ensure freedom of access to public contracts and equal treatment of candidates,
- Ensure transparency and control of the use of public funds.

Body in charge: The Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

- The management of the Executive Unit defines the needs in consultation with its team and estimates the costs (within the budget);
- The Executive Unit draws up a set of specifications;
- Depending on the estimated amount, either public procurement procedure is implemented or different suppliers are consulted;
- The Executive Unit acknowledges receipt of the tenders submitted, analyses them and responds;
- The Authorising Officer agrees and signs the order form (in accordance with the specifications);
- The accountant draws up the annual statement of the Agency's assets.

Upstream procedures: N/A

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference documents: Public Procurement Act 17 June 2016 implemented through the Royal decree of 18 April 2017 on public procurement in the traditional sectors, published in the *Moniteur belge* [Belgian Official Gazette] of 9 May 2017

Documents to be produced:

- Specifications,
- Order form,
- Statement of assets.

Procedure Sheet SU 06/1

Annual budgeting

*Date of approval:
1 March 2011*

*Date of last revision:
30 November 2020*

Definition: This procedure describes the steps to be taken for the budget and the rendering of accounts.

Objectives:

- Draw up the forecast of expenditure for the following budget year,
- Draw up a balance sheet of the Agency's revenues and expenditures.

Body in charge: The Executive Unit (the Authorising Officer and the accountant) and the Board.

Activities of the procedure:

a) Preparation of the budget:

- The Executive Unit prepares a draft budget (entitlements and commitments part and liquidation part (authorisations)) with an explanatory note and presents it to the Steering Committee once it is approved by the Board;
- After examination and approval by the Steering Committee, the Executive Unit sends its initial draft budget to the competent Minister, the Minister for the Budget, the Inspectorate of Finance, the Secretary General of the Ministry of the FWB and the Directorate General for the Budget and Finance of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, at the latest in June preceding the budget year in question. If approved, this draft is annexed to the draft decree containing the general expenditure budget of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. The budget will be encoded in SAP in January of the budget year so that credit reservations and accounting documents can be recorded (SU08);
- The Executive Unit updates its budget on 31 March (or according to the published date of the budgetary work of the FWB Government) of the budgetary year concerned at the latest (adding, if necessary, the exact carry-over established on 31 December of the previous budgetary year), has it approved by the Steering Committee and sends it to the competent Minister, as well as to the Minister for the Budget, the Inspectorate of Finance, the Secretary General of the Ministry of the FWB and the Department of the Budget and Finance of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. If approved, the adjusted budget is appended to the draft decree containing the general expenditure budget of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and encoded in SAP

b) Rendering of accounts

- At the end of each budget year, the Executive Unit draws up:
 - o a management account,
 - o a budget execution account,
 - o a balance sheet of the Agency,
 - o the statements of account from 1 January to 31 December of the budget year concerned;
- By 31 January of the following year at the latest, once approved by the Steering Committee, the Executive Unit sends the closed accounts to the competent Minister, the Inspectorate of Finance and the Director of the General Budget, Accounting and Expenditure Control Service (3 copies) who will forward them to the Minister for the Budget. The Minister for the Budget presents them to the Court of Audit by 15 July at

the latest. In practice, a delegation has been set up so that the Department of Budget and Finance can send the Agency's execution account to the Court of Auditors on behalf of the Minister for the Budget.

Upstream procedures: planning of the evaluations (MA 02).

Downstream procedures: Recurrent decision-making (MA 07) – approval of the budget.

Reference documents:

- Decree of 22 February 2008,
- AGCF du 6 November 2008,
- Strategic plan,
- Evaluation plans.

Documents to be produced:

- a) For the draft budget:
 - Execution account: "Entitlements and commitments" and "Liquidation (Authorisations)" tables,
 - Budget Explanatory Note,
 - Standard letter: "Transmission of the draft budget".
- b) For rendering accounts:
 - Execution account: "Entitlements and commitments" and "Liquidation (Authorisations)" tables,
 - Management account,
 - Balance sheet of the Agency in the form of a statement of payables and receivables,
 - Standard letter: "Accounting and rendering of accounts."

Procedure Sheet SU 06/2

Accounting management

*Date of approval:
1 March 2011*

*Date of last revision:
30 November 2020*

Definition: This procedure describes the steps to be taken to make sure that the Agency's accounts are properly managed.

Objective: Ensure the payment of invoices

Body in charge: The Executive Unit (the Authorising Officer, the accountant and the assistant of the Executive Unit).

Activities of the procedure:

The accountant carries out the following tasks:

- verifies the amount of the invoice according to the rules defined in various documents (Annex 4 of the expert contract for the experts or the rules of procedure for the members of the Steering Committee) for the claims of the experts, the members of the Steering Committee or the Executive Unit or any other person related to the evaluations and meetings,;
- in consultation with the staff of the Executive Unit responsible for coordinating the evaluation, draws up the service sheet for services rendered by the experts, in accordance with Annex 4 of the expert contract, and ends it to the expert for verification and signature;
- checks the amount for the service requested any other invoice or statement of claim;
- checks and endorses (by means of a stamp with the date of verification and the corresponding budget item and signature of the verifier) in the upper right-hand corner of all the aforementioned documents;
- has the assistant of the Executive unit check the statement of receivables that he (the accountant) has entered;
- has the paper document signed by the Authorising Officer (the debt declarations entered by the Delegated Authorising Officer on her own account are signed by the President);
- encodes the invoices, statements of receivables and service sheets in the accounting software provided for this purpose as soon as they are received and gives them a number. In the event of a new third party, uses the ZMDG01 function of the accounting software (SAP) in advance to send the request for the creation of the third party to the unit in charge of this flow, together with a scan of the accounting document signed by the Authorising Officer to be registered (each third party must mention its address, IBAN and either its VAT number or, if it is not a person liable for tax and is a Belgian national, the national number on the document to be registered);
- has the documents encoded beforehand electronically approved by the Authorising Officer via the accounting software for final booking and payment (yellow mark on the document);
- makes the payment via Belfius Web within 30 days maximum (puts a blue mark on the invoice);
- files the registered and paid document in the folder provided for this purpose;
- prints and file the statements and debit notices once a month;

- draws up the statement of expenditure for the monthly budget execution report.

Upstream procedures: Recurrent decision-making (MA 07) - approval of the budget.

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference documents:

- Decree of 22 February 2008,
- AGCF of 6 November 2008.

Documents to be produced: Monthly budget execution report

Procedure Sheet SU 07

Reservation of hotel rooms

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes the steps for booking hotel rooms for external evaluation visits.

Objectives: Make all hotel reservations in a systematic and complete manner so as to ensure the best possible working comfort for the committees; maintain a database for the best value for money.

Body in charge: The Executive Unit (the assistant of the Executive Unit and the Agency's accountant).

Activities of the procedure:

- For frequently requested hotels, the assistant of the Executive Unit and the Authorising Officer conclude a cooperation agreement so that the Agency can benefit from preferential rates;
- The assistant of the Executive Unit sends a table to the experts and the members of the Executive Unit based on the timeframe of visits and the agreed timetable (day/evening, in particular for Adult higher education colleges and the composition of the expert evaluation panel for each of them, transmitted by the officer in charge of the programme, and in compliance with the rules laid down in the expert contract. The experts and members of the Executive Unit complete this table by indicating the nights for which they would like a hotel room to be booked for them in the vicinity of the HEI being evaluated. For any hotel reservation made by the Executive Unit, the expert undertakes to send his reservation request within seven working days of the date on which the table is sent by the assistant of the Executive Unit. Once this deadline has passed, and following a reminder from the assistant, it is up to the expert to book his own accommodation in accordance with the procedures set out below;
- If an expert wishes to book a room in a hotel of his choice or if his request for a reservation has not reached the Executive Unit by the deadline set (see previous point), he is responsible for the entire reservation. At his request, the Executive Unit will inform him of the maximum amount that the AEQES will pay for accommodation. This amount corresponds to the average rate applied by hotels that meet to the selection criteria of the AEQES and are located in the vicinity of the HEI to be evaluated;
- The assistant compiles the reservation requests in a single table, established per programme;
- For frequently requested hotels with which a cooperation agreement has been concluded, the assistant sends a standard email to the selected hotel to book the number of rooms requested. This standard email and the acceptance (by the assistant) of the preferential rate quoted by the hotel in return is tantamount to an order form;
- For the other hotels, the assistant requests a price offer from hotels located near the HEI to be evaluated, and analyses the offers received according to their price and services provided. He then sends an email to the selected hotel confirming the reservation of the requested rooms and possibly a workspace for the preparatory meeting. This email is tantamount to an order form;

- The hotel sends a booking confirmation and possibly a pro-forma invoice to the assistant;
- The accountant of the Executive Unit pays the pro forma invoice (cf. Procedure SU 06/02);
- Two weeks before the visit, the assistant sends an e-mail to the experts and the Executive Unit with a summary of the rooms that have been booked and the hotel's contact details;
- The assistant keeps an overview of the dates when the information and/or booking requests were sent. In addition, he sees to the filing of all e-mails exchanged with the experts and the hotels;
- The assistant manages a list of hotels by region. The list is updated as feedback is received (opinions of members of the Executive Unit accompanying a visit and opinions of experts issued either individually or through the questionnaire completed at the end of the mission);
- The accountant records and pays the invoice sent by the hotel once the guest has checked out (cf. Procedure SU 06/2).

Upstream procedures:

- Composition and appointment of the expert evaluation panel (OP 02/2),

Downstream procedures:

- Collection and processing of information, feedback, updating of procedures and materials (GQ 01).
- Accounting management (SU 06/2).

Reference documents: N/A

Documents to be provided:

- Table experts and the Executive Unit can use to make a reservation request,
- Standard booking email to hotels (order form),
- Reservation confirmation email to the experts and the Executive Unit,
- Overview of the various information to be sent to the hotels and the experts,
- Updated database of hotels.

OPERATIONAL process

Procedure Sheet OP 01	
Triggering a programmatic evaluation	<i>Date of approval: 1 March 2011</i> <i>Date of last revision: 30 November 2020</i>

Definition: This procedure describes the formal launch of an evaluation.

Objective: Ensure full dissemination of information to all HEIs to be evaluated.

Body in charge: The Executive Unit, the Steering Committee.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Executive Unit sends a letter by registered post to the academic authorities of the HEIs to be evaluated, announcing the date(s) of the information meeting, and requesting, via a form, the identity and contact details of the self-evaluation coordinator and information on the programme(s) concerned by the evaluation. In addition, it asks the HEI to inform it of any particular situation (in particular, the recent completion of another evaluation or the co-organisation or joint degrees of the programme);
- An electronic version of this letter is sent to the person responsible for quality coordination at institutional level;
- The HEI may request a postponement of the evaluation in two cases:
 - 1) The programme has been organised in the HEI only recently. The HEI may ask to postpone an evaluation if it has graduated fewer than four classes of students by the date of the expert evaluation panel's (= n). If the HEI wishes to postpone the evaluation, it must submit an official letter to the Chairperson of the Agency within one month of the official launch of the evaluation exercise (launch letter sent to the academic authorities by registered post). The evaluation of the programme at this HEI will then be postponed until the next evaluation by the Agency.
 - 2) The HEI concerned will inform the Agency's Executive Unit. The latter will update the evaluation register and communicate the request for non-evaluation to the Steering Committee as part of the updating of the register.

This information is included in the system-wide analysis following the evaluation, in the form of a table with all the programmes and the programmes actually evaluated;

- The Executive Unit records the information received and presents the adjusted cadastre to the Steering Committee.

Upstream procedures: Planning of the evaluations (MA 02).

Downstream procedures: All Procedures OP 02 to OP 07.

Reference documents:

- Plan of the evaluations,
- List of the HEIs concerned by the evaluation drawn up on the basis of Annexes 3 and 6 of the Landscape decree.

Documents to be produced:

- Letter to the academic authorities and electronic copy to quality managers at institutional level,
- Programme information form,
- Database of designated coordinators for a given programme and update of the database of institutional coordinators,⁶
- Updated registers per programme.

⁶ These data are sent to the ARES for the search for experts (cf. Procedure OP 02/1)

Procedure Sheet OP 01

Terms and conditions for cooperation by and between the AEQES and another agency for an evaluation (recognition or joint evaluation)

*Date of approval:
30 November
2020*

*Date of last revision:
30 November 2020*

Definition: The procedure described below determines the terms and conditions under which, at the request of one or more HEIs, the AEQES the recognition of an evaluation or accreditation process of programme(s) organised by another external evaluation/accreditation body or, where appropriate, a joint evaluation.

Objectives: Provide a framework and principles for the processing of institutional applications for recognition of programme evaluation/accreditation, on a case-by-case basis, for all programmatic evaluations conducted by the Agency.

- For the HEIs:
 - Help to alleviate external quality assurance mechanisms for the same programme (and related workloads), when a programme is already engaged in (an)other external evaluation process(es);
 - Respond in general to the desire of FWB HEIs to use another agency, in particular in order to:
 - increase their visibility in specific areas where they demonstrate excellence, which will help them to position themselves further on a European or international level, in a context where the 'label' thus awarded by a sectoral agency/other quality bodies or agencies can contribute to raising their international profile and where the internationalisation of HEIs leads them to position themselves further in relation to their international partners;
 - offer an additional winning asset to their graduates (e.g. admission to engineering courses by the French State);
- For the AEQES:
 - Reaffirm the responsibility of HEIs in the quality assurance mechanisms they implement ("Quality assurance in higher education is based on the responsibility of HEIs for the quality of their programmes and other learning and services provided [...]", extract from ESG guideline 2.1);
 - Develop partnerships for mutual learning in the case of joint evaluations;
 - Benefit from monitoring the reference framework of other organisations.

Bodies in charge: The Steering Committee, the Recognition Committee, the Executive Unit, the partner organisation (in the case of a joint evaluation).

The Recognition Committee consists of two people with no conflict of interest either with FWB HEIs or with the Steering Committee (e.g. members of ENQA/EQAR, quality assurance agencies, AEQES experts) and two members of the Executive Unit. The Steering Committee, appoints the members of the Recognition Committee (nominated by the Board) for a maximum term of five years, tacitly renewable each year.

Activities of the procedure:

Step 1: APPLICATION

- An HEI that wishes to obtain recognition of an evaluation conducted by an external body other than the AEQES files an individual application for recognition with the AEQES, stating reasons and providing evidence that the objectives and criteria of this evaluation are compatible with those of the AEQES. This application may be filed by one HEI or by several HEIs in a concerted manner;
- The application must be filed with the Agency's Executive Unit at the latest within one month after the launch of the official letter of evaluation by the AEQES. The Executive Unit takes due note thereof and informs the Steering Committee;
- The application for recognition is admissible and will be analysed even if the evaluation/accreditation process of the programme is in progress at the time of the application;⁷
- A standard format⁸ is used for the application, comprising the following elements:
 - o Identification of the external body,
 - o Reason for the request for recognition,
 - o Information on the procedure (including the evaluation criteria, periodicity of evaluations, methodology for the selection of experts, publication of the results).

Step 2: ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION

There are two types of applications for recognition: recognition of programme evaluation/accreditation by a body recognised by the EQAR; and recognition of programme evaluation/accreditation by a body not recognised by EQAR.

a. Evaluation/accreditation by a body recognised by the EQAR

In the case of an application for recognition of a programme evaluation/accreditation process conducted by a body recognised by the EQAR, the Executive Unit will review the application. Recognition of the process is proposed to the Steering Committee.

b. Evaluation/accreditation by a body not recognised by the EQAR

In the case of an application for recognition of evaluation/accreditation of programme(s) by a body not recognised by the EQAR, the Executive Unit convenes the Recognition Committee, which proceeds to examine applications from HEIs on a case-by-case basis.

The following criteria are taken into account:

- Compatibility of the objectives, criteria and procedures of the evaluation for which recognition is sought with the objectives pursued by the AEQES and the criteria of its evaluation frame of reference.
- Compatibility with the ESGs: among the ESGs, particular emphasis is put on:
 - o The publication of the evaluation reports (including a right of reply) by the external body and publication of the action plan resulting from the evaluation (ESG 2.6);

⁷ The decision is based on the evaluation process undertaken with an external organization and not on the *outcome* of the evaluation.

⁸ This template is available on:

http://www.aeqes.be/agence_composition_commission.cfm

- Independence of the evaluation (degree of externality of experts) (ESG 1.10 and ESG 2.4);
- Quality assurance activities, policies and procedures (ESG 3.1).

If one or more criteria of the AEQES frame of reference or one or more methodological points are missing from said evaluation, the Recognition Commission shall draw up a proposal to be submitted to the Steering Committee.

The Recognition Commission will certify compliance with these principles in a report to the Steering Committee for its decision as to the recognition application.

Step 3: AGENCY DECISION

In both cases, the decision on recognition is taken by the Steering Committee and recorded in the minutes of one of its plenary sessions. The AEQES informs the applicant HEI of its decision by letter.

a. Recognition

The Steering Committee recognises the evaluation/accreditation process carried out by another body. The period of validity of the recognition is equivalent to the programme evaluation cycle of the AEQES. A new application for recognition must be made when a new evaluation exercise is launched by the AEQES.

b. Conditional recognition

The Steering Committee agrees to recognise the process on certain conditions (e.g. publication of the evaluation report). If the HEI does not accept these conditions, it must join the AEQES evaluation process.

c. No recognition: feasibility analysis of a joint evaluation

In cases where recognition is not granted on the basis of the above criteria, the Steering Committee may propose to the applicant HEIs to explore with the Executive Unit and the external body the feasibility of a joint evaluation.

The Steering Committee bases its proposal on the following considerations:

- Compliance with the planning established by the AEQES
- Legitimacy of the external body,
- Degree of convergence of methodologies and standards.

The Executive Unit contacts the HEIs concerned.

If the HEIs so wish, the Executive Unit contacts the external body to prepare a cooperation agreement, taking into account the elements pointed out by the Recognition Commission and the Steering Committee. HEIs may also decide to join the AEQES evaluation process.

The cooperation agreement describes the terms of reference of the exercise (evaluation frame of reference, methodology) and its implementation. It specifies, among other things, the presence of AEQES experts and a member of the Executive Unit during the visits, the coordination of preparatory activities, including the meetings of the coordinators. It also specifies the conduct of the visits and the procedures for the production of reports. Finally, the agreement provides for the possibility for the Agency to publish the system-wide analysis without payment of additional royalties.

If the language of the evaluation by the partner organisation is not French, the evaluated HEIs shall bear the responsibility and cost of translating the self-evaluation files for the AEQES experts.

The Agency will bear the costs of translating the experts' reports for the HEIs and for publishing them on the website.

The coordinators' meetings are organised by the AEQES. The presence of representatives of the external body is desirable at least at one meeting of the coordinators.

The experts are appointed according to Procedure OP03.

The Agency limits its financial intervention to the coverage of the tasks assigned to it by decree. Each AEQES expert is bound to the Agency by a contract. It is this exert contract that determines the amount of the Agency's contribution.

The cooperation agreement is signed by the chair of the AEQES Steering Committee and by the ad hoc authorities of the external body.

Step 4: PUBLICATION OF REPORTS

In the event of recognition, the Executive Unit publishes the evaluation report produced by the external body or a link thereto on the Agency's website.

In the event of a joint evaluation, the Executive Unit publishes the joint evaluation report and any system-wide analysis on the Agency's website as is customary for standard evaluations.

Upstream procedures: Triggering an evaluation (OP 01).

Downstream procedures:

- Preparation of an external evaluation exercise (OP 03) - for joint evaluations,
- Drawing up and sending evaluation reports (OP 05).

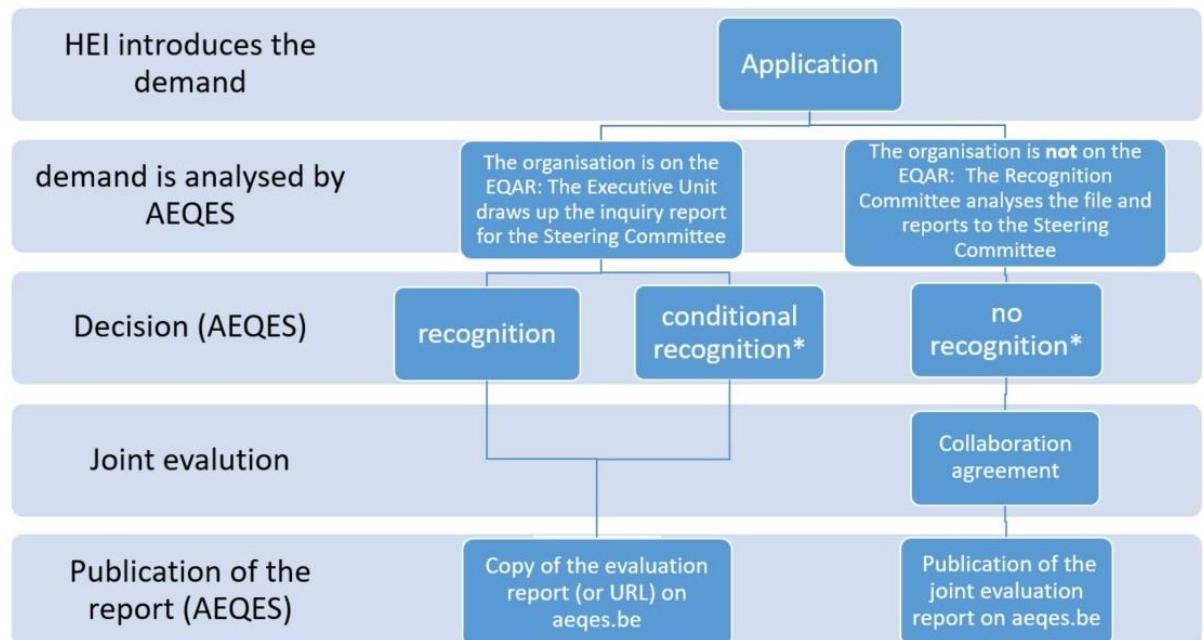
Reference documents:

- Yerevan Ministerial Conference Communiqué (2015),
- European Qualifications Framework,
- EQAR on cross-border quality assurance (CBQA),
- Key considerations for cross-border quality assurance in the EHEA,
- EQAR register.

Documents to be produced:

- For the HEI, recognition application,
- Where applicable, minutes attesting to the examination of the file by the Recognition Commission,
- Letter announcing the result of the examination of this application,
- Where applicable, cooperation agreement, frame of reference and joint evaluation tools.

Illustration:



* In the cases marked with an asterisk, the HEI can join the AEQES evaluation process.

Procedure Sheet OP 02/1

Collection and approval of applications from experts and, for initial evaluations, selection of chairperson(s)

*Date of approval:
1 March 2011*

*Date of last revision:
30 November 2020*

Definition: This procedure describes how the Executive Unit collects applications from potential experts through its Expert Evaluation Panel, ensures the approval of such applications, and selects the chairperson(s) for initial evaluations.

Objective: Ensure a rigorous and systematic selection of experts so as to guarantee the legitimacy of the external evaluation

Body in charge: The Executive Unit *via la* Expert Evaluation Panel.

By way of reminder, an Expert Evaluation Panel has been tasked by the Steering Committee to:

- analyse all applications from potential experts and check their admissibility;
- request additional information as and when necessary;
- approval the applications, on the basis of the criteria established in the case law;
- communicate the Panel's decision to the candidate experts;
- Identify and rank in order of preference the experts "eligible to chair" a specific programme (only for initial evaluations);
- ensure a reflection on its functioning and tools.

Activities of the procedure:

a) Composition of the panel:

Within the Executive Unit, the Expert Evaluation Panel is composed of permanent members:

- o a system-wide member;
- o a secretary in charge of the minutes, the database and the letters relating to the recruitment of experts;
- o the management of the Executive Unit ;

It also includes non-permanent members:

- o the coordinator(s) of the cluster(s) evaluated.

b) Collection of applications:

- The Expert Evaluation Panel draws up a call for applications per cluster evaluated, which it disseminates widely and consults the database of system-wide experts or experts who have participated in an evaluation in a similar disciplinary field;
- At the same time, the Expert Evaluation Panel contacts the ARES to request a list of applications from experts for a given cluster (March n-2) and sends it the contact details of the academic authorities, institutional quality coordinators and coordinators concerned;
- The Expert Evaluation Panel receives the lists from the ARES (November n-1) as well as spontaneous applications;

c) Analysis of the applications:

- The Expert Evaluation Panel:
 - a. analyses the applications from potential experts (from the lists provided by the ARES or unsolicited applications) and checks whether they are admissible;
 - b. requests additional information as and when necessary;

- c. approves the applications on the basis of the case law;
- d. identifies and ranks in order of preference the experts “eligible to chair” initial evaluations.
- The Expert Evaluation Panel ensures that all candidates are regularly informed of the process for the approval of their application and, if necessary, informs the candidate that his or her application was not approved and gives reasons for the decision.

Upstream procedure: Triggering an evaluation (OP 01).

Downstream procedure: Composition and appointment of expert evaluation panels (OP 02/2).

Reference documents:

- Articles 12 and 16, decree of 22 February 2008,
- Rules of procedure of the Expert Evaluation Panel, published on the AEQES website,
- Case law entitled: “Experts AEQES: recrutement, validation des candidatures et composition des comités d’experts,” [AEQES experts: recruitment, approval of applications and composition of expert evaluation panels], posted on the AEQES website.

Documents to be produced:

- Post circulated to the ARES
- Minutes of the Expert Evaluation Panel meetings with reasoned decisions,
- Database of processed applications,
- Follow-up e-mails on applications to expert candidates,
- Annual report to the Steering Committee and balance sheet for the attention of the ARES.

Procedure Sheet OP 02/2

Composition and appointment of the expert evaluation panel

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes the steps for select experts and setting up their panels.

Objective: Ensure a rigorous and systematic selection of experts so as to guarantee the legitimacy of the external evaluation.

Bodies in charge: The Expert Evaluation Panel, the Executive Unit and the chairperson(s) of the Expert Evaluation Panel, the Chair of the Agency and the Authorising Officer (signing of contracts).

Activities of the procedure:

a) For initial evaluations:

- The Executive Unit contacts the chairperson(s) chosen by the Expert Evaluation Panel to propose the assignment;
- If the chairperson(s) accept(s) the expert evaluation assignment, the Executive Unit sends them all the expert applications approved by the Expert Evaluation Panel, as well as a proposal for the composition of the panel according to the rules established by the Agency;
- Potential experts are contacted by the Executive Unit according to the order of preference established in cooperation with the chairperson(s) until the panel is complete;
- Once the panel has been put together, the evaluation coordinator in the Executive Unit will pass on the information to the entire Executive Unit;
- At the end of the selection procedure, the Expert Evaluation Panel sends a letter to the experts who did not join the panel to inform them that their application has been included in the AEQES database of potential experts. Peer experts and experts from the profession are invited to inform the Executive Unit about future evaluations that are of interest to them. Applications from experts in education or quality management are included in the database; as "system-wide" experts, they may be contacted for any future evaluation. Unsuccessful applications from student experts are entered into the database; as system-wide experts within the same field of study, they may also be contacted for future evaluation (provided that the applicant is still a student at the time of the external evaluation).

b) For continuous evaluations:

- The Executive Unit then composes the continuous evaluation panel.
- The Executive Unit selects from the database of experts those who have demonstrated the required skills, posture and commitment during a past evaluation. If necessary, it may call on an expert hired for a first assignment at the AEQES (going through all the planned approval steps). It contacts them to check whether they are interested in the assignment, and request an updated CV and a statement of independence;
- The Executive Unit and the Expert Evaluation Panel draw up the list of candidates, check the conditions of independence, the updating of expert evaluation and the availability of potential experts;

- The Executive Unit then composes the continuous evaluation panel.

Then, for all types of initial and continuous evaluations:

- The Executive Unit draws up the expert contracts signed by the Chairperson of the Agency and the Authorising Officer;
- The Executive Unit draws up the mission orders signed by the Ordering Officer;
- Once the contracts have signed, a short CV of each expert (endorsed by the expert) is posted on the Agency's website (cf. SU 02).

Upstream procedures:

- Triggering an evaluation (OP 01),
- Approval of applications from experts and selection of chairperson(s) (OP 02/1).

Downstream procedures:

- Communication of the composition of the expert evaluation panels to the HEIs (OP 02/3),
- Preparation of an external evaluation exercise (OP 03)
- Carrying out the visit of the expert evaluation panel (OP 04),
- Drawing up and sending the evaluation reports (OP 05).

Reference documents:

- Articles 12 and 16, decree of 22 February 2008,
- Potential expert identification sheets,
- Databases of experts,
- Standard expert contracts, their annexes and mission order,
- Rules of procedure of the Agency, case law entitled "Experts AEQES: recrutement, validation des candidatures et composition des comités d'experts" [AEQES experts: recruitment, approval of applications and composition of expert evaluation panels]

Documents to be produced:

- Contracts and mission orders of experts,
- Letter to experts not selected,
- Table of panel composition,
- Short CVs of experts taken on for publication on the website.

Procedure Sheet OP 02/3

Communication of the composition of the expert evaluation panels to the HEIs

*Date of approval:
10 November
2015*

*Date of last revision:
30 November 2020*

Definition: This procedure describes the steps for communicating the composition of expert evaluation panels to HEIs and, for HEIs, the steps for declaring a possible conflict of interest for one or more members of the expert evaluation panel.

Objectives: Ensure that HEIs are well informed about the composition of the expert evaluation panel and prevent any conflict of interest.

Bodies in charge: The Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Executive Unit consults the HEIs in order to draw up the timetable of visits (see OP 03) and informs them of the composition of the expert evaluation panel (available on the Agency's website);
- The Executive Unit informs each HEI, a few weeks before the visit, of the names of the experts appointed to carry out the evaluation;
- Each HEI has the possibility to report to the Executive Unit a possible conflict of interest with one or more experts listed. In such a case, the report must be substantiated and communicated within ten working days;
- The Executive Unit takes note of the alert and analyses whether it is admissible. It then takes the appropriate measures to ensure that the evaluations run smoothly.

Upstream procedures:

- Triggering an evaluation (OP 01),
- Approval of applications from experts and selection of the chairperson(s) (OP 02/1),
- Composition and appointment of the expert evaluation panel (OP 02/2).

Downstream procedures: Preparation and conduct of site visits (OP 03).

Reference documents:

- Decree of 22 February 2008,
- Code of ethics,
- Document "Experts AEQES: recrutement, validation des candidatures et composition des comités d'experts"[AEQES experts: recruitment, approval of applications and composition of expert evaluation panels]

Documents to be produced: Information email to HEIs on the composition of the panel.

Procedure Sheet OP 03

Preparation of an external evaluation exercise

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
6 February 2018

Definition: This procedure describes the steps for preparing an external evaluation exercise.

Objectives: Ensure a systematic, comprehensive and transparent preparation (in terms of information and logistics) for external evaluations.

Body in charge: The Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Executive Unit conducts documentary research on the programme: legal references, records, analysis of career opportunities, collection of quantitative data, etc.;
- The Executive Unit organises the coordinators' meetings;
- The Executive Unit receives the self-evaluation or progress reports, acknowledges their receipt, verifies that they are complete and sends them to the experts;
- The Executive Unit draws up the following provisional timetables:
 - o Timetable of pre-evaluation interviews (for initial evaluations only): depending on the availability of the chairperson;
 - o Timetable of visits: depending on the availability of the experts, this timetable is submitted simultaneously to all HEIs to be evaluated. The HEIs inform the Executive Unit of their availability for each of the proposed dates. The Executive Unit draws up the timetable of visits and informs the coordinators and quality coordinators, the academic authority (rector and dean for universities, director-president and category director for higher education, head of Adult higher education college, director for the ESA), the experts (also via the mission order appended to the contract) by e-mail;
 - o Experts' work timetable: the timetable for the experts' training seminar, pre-interviews and report production is set in advance by the Executive Unit, in consultation with the experts.

Upstream procedures:

- Triggering an evaluation (OP 01),
- Composition and appointment of the expert evaluation panel (OP 02/2).

Downstream procedures:

- Implementation of the visit of the expert evaluation panel,
- Drawing up and sending the evaluation reports (OP 05),
- Evaluation follow-up (OP 06).

Reference documents: N/A

Documents to be produced:

- Acknowledgement of receipt of self-evaluation and progress reports,
- Letter of transmittal of the self-evaluation and progress reports to the experts,
- Email to the coordinators to define the visit schedule,

Timetable of visits.

Procedure Sheet OP 04

Implementation of the visit of the expert evaluation panel

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes the steps to be taken to ensure that an evaluation visit is carried out properly.

Objectives: Ensure that procedures are followed, that ethical rules are observed and that equal treatment is given to the HEIs to be evaluated; evaluate programmes, highlighting good practice, shortcomings and problems to be solved.

Body in charge: The Expert evaluation panel and the Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

- Before the visit:
 - o Three weeks before the visit , the Executive Unit receives a completed schedule from the HEI, including the various participants in the interviews, the precise address of the place where the visit is to take place, and the arrangements for access to the intranet for the expert evaluation panel;
 - o The Executive Unit sends this information to the members of the expert evaluation panel together with a preparation table to be completed;
 - o The expert evaluation panel receives the logistical information also (cf. Procedure SU 07)
 - o The Executive Unit reads the self-evaluation report and compiles the useful documents;
 - o In cooperation with the chair of the committee for initial evaluations, the Executive Unit ensures that the expert evaluation panel prepares properly for the visit (transmittal of the completed preparatory table, etc.);
- During the visit:
 - o In cooperation with the expert evaluation panel, the Executive Unit ensures fair treatment of the HEIs to be evaluated and provides methodological, ethical and informational support regarding the context of higher education in the FWB and quality assurance;
 - o The Executive Unit ensures the respect of the visit schedule drawn up in consultation with the HEI ;
 - o The Executive Unit takes notes (*verbatim*) throughout the interviews, taking care to preserve the anonymity of the people interviewed in the transcription of their words;
 - o The Executive Unit assists the expert evaluation panel in preparing the oral report in accordance with the evaluation guidelines;
- At the end of the visit:
 - o The Executive Unit sends the feedback document and the *verbatim* report of the interviews to the entire expert evaluation panel;
 - o The Unit sends a satisfaction survey to the persons met who have agreed.

Upstream procedures:

- Triggering an evaluation (OP 01),
- Preparation of an external evaluation exercise (OP 03),
- Documentary and legislative monitoring (SU 03).

Downstream procedures: Drawing up and sending evaluation reports (OP 05).

Reference document: Decree of 22 February 2008.

Documents to be produced / completed:

- Standard visit schedule,
- Table for the preparation of the visit completed by the members of the expert evaluation panel,
- *Verbatim* and feedback template,
- Satisfaction survey.

Procedure Sheet OP 05

Drawing up and sending evaluation reports

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes the steps required to draft, send and publish the initial evaluation reports, the continuous evaluation reports and the system-wide analysis to the various recipients.

Objectives: Ensure that the various evaluation reports are drawn up and sent out in a systematic and complete manner, as well as optimal dissemination of the evaluation results. Ensure the independence of the experts and the exercise of the right of reply by each evaluated HEI.

Bodies in charge: The Expert evaluation panel, the Executive Unit and the HEIs.

Activities of the procedure:

a. Initial evaluation reports and continuous evaluation reports:

- The Executive Unit and the expert evaluation panel develop the methodology and timetable for drafting the reports jointly within the framework of the legal (cf. AGCF of 19 December 2008) and contractual constraints, and in accordance with the editorial line established by the Agency;
 - o In the case of initial evaluations, the chairperson of the expert evaluation panel is responsible for submitting the preliminary reports on behalf of and with the consent of the members of that panel to the Executive Unit within one month after the last visit at the latest;
 - o In the case of continuous evaluations, the expert evaluation panel agrees on the drafting procedures and submits the preliminary reports to the Executive Unit as a group within one month of the last visit;
- The Executive Unit is put in cc in e-mails exchanged during the drafting of the reports;
- The Executive Unit reviews each report to make sure that it complies with the legal framework, that it covers the evaluation guidelines, that the anonymity of the people interviewed is respected and that the report is easy to read;
- Once the panel has unanimously approved the preliminary reports, the Executive Unit sends them simultaneously to each evaluated HEI by e-mail;
The preliminary report is sent at least to the academic authorities, the institutional quality coordinator and the self-evaluation coordinator. This report may also be sent to other people who participated in the first interview of the visit.

The term "academic authorities" here covers:

- o Rector, possibly Vice- or Pro-Rector, and Dean at the university,
- o Director-President, Director of category in the University Colleges,
- o Director and area director (if any) in the Higher Schools of Arts,
- o Director and deputy director (if any) of Adult higher education colleges.
- The preliminary report is accompanied by standard documents and an explanatory note so as to enable the HEI to make both factual corrections and substantive observations as and where necessary within the time limit set. Pursuant to Article 10 of the decree, the HEI may object to the publication of its evaluation report (cf. OP 02);
- The HEI submits its right of reply within the time limit set (by completing the templates "*Right of reply*" and "*Factual errors*");

- The Executive Unit forwards the rights of reply received to the expert evaluation panel;
- The experts decide on the possible changes requested by the HEI, the Executive Unit enters them into the preliminary report and sends the result of the expert evaluation panel's decisions to the HEI;
- If necessary, the HEI sends a new version of the right of reply to the Executive Unit, which takes into account the changes made to the report (this new version may not contain new observations);
- The Executive Unit enters the HEI's substantive comments at the end of the report and creates ad hoc references via hyperlinks in the report;
- The Executive Unit publishes on the Agency's website the evaluation reports of each HEI for a given programme simultaneously in pdf format;
- The Executive Unit informs the expert evaluation panel, the recipients of the preliminary report, and the people met during the visit who wish to be kept informed of the publication of the reports, by e-mail;
 - o The e-mail sent to the academic authorities and quality coordination bodies mentions the next steps in the process (publication of the action plan, progress report);
- Special cases:
 - o If the deadline given to the HEI to send in its right of reply and/or its amended right of reply following the decisions of the expert evaluation panel is not met and hinders the publication of the reports of a given programme, the preliminary report is published without the right of reply on the scheduled date. This published version includes the watermark "draft version" and a note in place of the right of reply stating: "The evaluated HEI has to date not submitted a right of reply."
 - o Pursuant to an article of the 2008 AEQES decree, the academic authorities may explicitly refuse to publish the report. Reasons must be given for this refusal. The Agency issues a reasoned opinion on this refusal in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Government. This opinion is posted on the Agency's website. In practice, this provision has never been requested. Furthermore, it is at odds with the ESGs which require the publication of reports, even negative ones.

b. System-wide analysis

- The expert evaluation panel and the Executive Unit develop the methodology and timetable for drafting the system-wide analysis jointly, in line with contractual expectations;
- The expert evaluation panel draws up a list of figures and provides any background information it deems useful for drafting the system-wide analysis. The Executive Unit gathers the available information and sends it to the expert evaluation panel;
- The Executive Unit drafts the introduction to the system-wide analysis setting the context for the evaluation;
- The expert evaluation panel drafts the system-wide analysis and approves it unanimously;
- The expert evaluation panel also drafts a summary of its analysis, which is featured at the beginning of the document;
- The Executive Unit invites the HEIs concerned, the members of the Steering Committee and a representative of the ARES to the presentation of the system-wide analysis;
- The chairperson of the expert evaluation panel and/or a member of the Committee (especially in the case of continuous evaluations) presents the system-wide analysis on the scheduled date and answers questions from the participants;

- The Executive Unit publishes the system-wide analysis of the programme and, where appropriate, the oral presentation material on the Agency's website;
- The Executive Unit informs the expert evaluation panel, the representatives of the HEIs involved in the evaluation and the people met during the visit, by e-mail, that the system-wide analysis has been posted on the website;
- The Executive Unit sends the system-wide analysis to the service provider who takes care of the layout for printing, proofreads and signs the "ready for printing" release form;
- The Executive Unit sends the printed system-wide analysis by post to at least the academic authorities, the institutional quality coordinators and the self-evaluation coordinators concerned, as well as to the ARES and its relevant thematic chambers and committees, to the minister(s) responsible for higher education, to the members of the relevant Commissions of the Parliament of the French-speaking Community, to the SIEP (Information Service on Studies and Occupations), to the student associations and to any other possible partner.

Upstream procedures:

- Triggering an evaluation (OP 01),
- Preparation of the evaluation (OP 03),
- Implementation of site visits (OP 04).

Downstream procedures: Evaluation follow-up (OP 06).

Reference document:

- Article 10 of the AEQES decree of 2008,
- Decree of 19 December 2008.

Documents to be produced:

- Preliminary evaluation reports,
- E-mails for the transmittal of the preliminary reports,
- Explanatory note on the right of reply and templates for the recording of factual errors and the right of reply,
- Explanatory note on system-wide analysis (for experts),
- Evaluation reports,
- System-wide analysis,
- Information e-mails on publications and letter of transmittal for the system-wide analysis,
- Satisfaction survey of HEIs regarding the reports.

Procedure Sheet OP 06

Evaluation follow-up

Date of approval:
1 March 2011

Date of last revision:
30 November 2020

Definition: This procedure describes the steps required to ensure that the follow-up to the evaluation (development and publication of the action plan by the HEI) is carried out properly.

Objectives: The aim of the follow-up phase is to anchor the quality process and ensure its sustainability.

Bodies in charge: the HEIs evaluated in cooperation with the Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

- The Executive Unit sets the date by which the action plans of the HEIs must be received and published (date common to all the HEIs to be evaluated, at the latest within six months after the publication of the reports for initial evaluations; three months after publication of the continuous evaluation reports);
- The HEIs draw up the action plan, post it on their website and send the document to the Executive Unit together with the URL of the web page where the document was published;
- The Unit acknowledges receipt and mentions the year of the mid-term review;
- The Executive Unit archives the action plans and informs the experts that they have been published.

Upstream procedures:

- Triggering an evaluation (OP 01),
- Preparation of the evaluation (OP 03),
- Implementation of the visit (OP 04),
- Reporting, right of reply and publication (OP 05).

Downstream procedures: N/A

Reference document: Decree of 22 February 2008

Documents to be produced: Action plan (by the HEIs).

Procedure Sheet OP 07

Mid-term review

*Date of approval:
30 November 2020*
*Date of last revision:
30 November 2020*

Definition: This procedure describes how HEIs are invited to conduct a mid-term review between two evaluations.

Objectives: Support HEIs in their drive for continuous improvement, in the pursuit of actions taken and in the development of steering tools. In so doing, the procedure ensures that an active commitment to an integrated quality culture is maintained.

For the HEIs, the mid-term review enables them to make an initial evaluation of the implementation of the action plan drawn up at the end of the previous evaluation, to capitalise on the improvements made by informing the stakeholders of the actions carried out as part of a continuous improvement process, to take stock of their change management and to update their action plan as and where necessary.

Bodies in charge: the HEIs and the Executive Unit.

Activities of the procedure:

- The year of the mid-term review is set at the mid-point between two evaluations (N+3). This timetable is confirmed at the time the previous evaluation is closed (cf. Procedures OP 05 and OP 06),
- At the beginning of year n+3, the Executive Unit sends a reminder to the HEIs concerned;
- By the end of March of year n+3, the HEI submits to the Executive Unit the confidential report on the mid-term review which includes at least an evaluation of the action plan published at the end of the previous evaluation,
- The Executive Unit archives these documents, which will be forwarded to the panel conducting the next evaluation visit.

Upstream procedures: Initial evaluation follow-up (OP 06).

Downstream procedures: Triggering an evaluation (OP 01).

Reference documents:

- Guidelines for HEI