

HCERES

Haut conseil de l'évaluation de la recherche
et de l'enseignement supérieur

Europe and International Department



Evaluation of foreign higher
education and research institutions –
External evaluation standards

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Introduction

This document presents the standards for the external evaluation and the accreditation criteria and of foreign higher education and research institutions. It complies with the broad framework of principles defined at the European level.

The member countries of the European Higher Education Area participating in the Bologna Process have undertaken to comply with common principles defined in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). These principles cover internal quality assurance within institutions, external quality assurance as implemented by evaluation agencies, and finally, quality assurance as it applies to the agencies themselves. To illustrate this, the principle of evaluation agency independence is expressed in France through the status of HCERES as an independent administrative authority. More generally, the recognition of HCERES and its inclusion on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) ensure that its practices comply with European principles.

With regard to the external evaluation of institutions, the ESGs state that:

- the goals and objectives of the evaluation must be clear and made publicly available;
- the evaluation procedures must fulfil their objectives and be based on appropriate procedures;
- reviewers and those being evaluated must be familiar with the evaluation procedures;
- in particular, the criteria must be explicit and made publicly available.

These standards are intended to meet these conditions, as well as helping institutions in their continuous improvement efforts, and informing stakeholders as best as possible.

These standards also cover both the assessment of activities and results and the analysis of procedures and mechanisms for continuous improvement. The external evaluation of an institution is a process that takes into account research and teaching activities within an overall strategic assessment, making a link between governance, management and the fulfilment of the institution's missions. The evaluation assesses the organisational structure, operation and results of the institution in each of the relevant areas of activity, paying particular attention to its quality assurance policy.

These standards are organised into six areas which represent the main sectors of activity corresponding to the missions of higher education, together with strategy and governance, and management. These 6 areas are subdivided into 17 fields of activity which define the main topics on which evaluation will focus.

Each field includes one or more standards. These state expectations, and the evaluation assesses to what extent they are fulfilled. To this end, each standard is accompanied by guidelines on how they should be interpreted. These explain and detail the content of the standards and how reviewers should assess to what extent they are fulfilled.

Standards

Area 1: Strategy and governance

Field 1: The institution's missions and its strategic positioning

Standard 1: The institution's missions are clearly defined, understood and shared internally

- The institution knows its national and local environment.
- The institution's missions are clearly defined, and all activities performed refer to them.

Standard 2: The institution has positioned itself according to the local and international context in which it operates

- The institution capitalises on the opportunities and risks of its environment.
- The institution has an explicit statement of vision for its present and future role in society.

Standard 3: The institution has developed a strategy corresponding to its missions and environment

- Strategic priorities are clearly identifiable and correspond to the institution's missions and environment. These strategic priorities are applied in all its activities.
- The main partners are taken into account in strategy development.
- The values of the institution are defined, known and shared internally.
- The institution evaluates its results with respect to its objectives.

Field 2: Internal organisation and strategy implementation

Standard 1: Governance is organised and functions so as to serve the operation of the institution and strategy development

- Governance bodies and stakeholders have defined duties and roles which enable decision-making and effective action.
- The various categories of staff and students participate in governance bodies and processes.
- Strategic decision-making processes are explicitly stated, organised and effective.

Standard 2: The internal organisation of the institution is consistent with its development challenges

- The organisation of campuses and teaching and research bodies is consistent with the strengths of the institution and its strategy.
- Activities are managed based on effective organisation and well-defined support services.
- Teaching, research and administrative bodies share the institution's strategic priorities and contribute to achieving them.

Field 3: The institution's identity and communication

Standard: The institution asserts its identity and develops a consistent communication policy

- The institution develops a structured and reliable communication policy that uses the most well-suited media.
- The institution has defined an internal communication policy that serves its strategy. It also provides relevant information on prospective analyses and major programming information.
- The tools used to express the institution's identity are well-coordinated. These tools encourage staff and students to become engaged and the involvement of internal bodies.
- Internal communication contributes, in various ways, to providing staff and students with information and encourages their involvement. This communication is integrated into the life of the institution.
- External communication of the institution and its internal bodies is consistent with the strategy, in both form and approach. It is adapted to the various audiences that it targets.

Area 2: Research and teaching

Field 1: Research policy

Standard 1: The institution has defined a research policy.

- The institution's research policy contributes to the economic and sociocultural development of its territory, and the competitiveness of the country.
- Scientific priorities have been defined. They comply with the institution's missions and are consistent with its strategy.
- Research teams and laboratories are identified.
- The missions of research stakeholders are clearly defined and recognised.
- Human and other resources assigned to research are defined.
- The institution positions itself in the national and international research environment. It is involved in national and international organisations or networks.

Standard 2: Research is managed in such a way as to enable the institution to meet its objectives

- The institution has a body responsible for implementing strategy and structuring research.
- Decision-making processes for assigning resources to research are clearly stated and implemented in a transparent manner.
- The services which oversee research have tools for monitoring research.
- Internal evaluation processes for research activities are implemented in line with quality policies.

Standard 3: The institution pursues an adapted research exploitation and results dissemination policy¹

- The institution has defined a research exploitation policy adapted to the opportunities, strengths and environment of the institution.
- The institution monitors the exploitation of research results.

¹ The exploitation of research includes partnership actions, expertise, patents and licences, incubators and start-ups. The exploitation of research involves the development of innovation, of technology transfer where possible and expertise. It also includes the publication of research and university press activities.

- The institution develops a communication policy around its results exploitation activities and range of services for the business and sociocultural sectors.

OPTIONS:

- The institution includes the promotion and enrichment of regional languages and cultures, and the study and promotion of aspects of national and regional heritage in its research and teaching activities.

Field 2: Teaching policy

Standard 1: The institution has defined a teaching policy that includes the skill component

- The strategic priorities for teaching are consistent with the institution's strengths.
- The programme offering is structured in a comprehensible manner and the entities responsible for implementing it are identified.
- The missions and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in teaching activities are clearly defined and recognised.
- Human and other resources assigned to teaching activities are defined.
- Through the development of relationships or alliances, the institution integrates its initial and continuing education activity into its territorial and regional environment, and reinforces its local, national and international appeal.

Standard 2: The institution's teaching policy includes teaching methods that are adapted to its various audiences

- The teaching methods implemented (initial training, apprenticeships, work-linked training, continuing training; multi-disciplinary courses, distance learning, innovative approaches) comply with the diversity and needs of students.
- The institution provides its students with a suitable working environment for learning and teaching activities.
- The institution develops an educational innovation policy and adapts its teaching methods, in particular by using digital tools and resources.

Standard 3: Teaching activities are managed and organised in such a way as to enable the institution to meet its objectives

- Study programme support services are organised effectively, from the level of the institution down to the teaching teams.
- The institution knows and manages all the human, financial and material resources of its teaching structures.

Standard 4: The institution complies with pre-defined and published regulations covering student admission, progression, and recognition and certification of learning outcomes

- The institution provides students with documents explaining the qualification they have obtained and their learning outcomes.
- Admission and recognition procedures are adapted to teaching objectives and encourage student mobility.
- The criteria and methods for evaluating students are published in advance. Students have access to a formal appeals procedure.

Standard 5: The institution monitors and disseminates its results, and implements internal evaluation and quality management tools

- Full information on study programmes are published regularly.
- The results from the teaching activity are monitored regularly, described objectively and published.
- The institution evaluates study programmes and their content. This includes evaluations carried out by students which are taken into account.
- The institution has implemented periodic reviews of study programmes.

Field 3: The link between research and teaching

Standard: Research and teaching policies are coordinated and adapted to align with the institution's strategy.

- The methods for coordinating research and teaching policies are adapted in accordance, in particular, with the disciplines, types of research or teaching levels, and the nature of activities concerned.
- Where the institution has defined a Doctorate-level teaching policy, the policy relies on the link between teaching and research.
- The staff recruitment policy contributes to the link between research and teaching.

Area 3: Student academic pathways

Field 1: Academic pathways, from career guidance to employment

Standard 1: Academic pathways from career guidance to employment are organised and adapted to students' needs in order to help them succeed

- The institution develops consistent actions to help secondary and post-secondary students with career guidance and information.
- The institution has a policy for providing information and services to all types of students at all levels of training. This policy includes measures adapted to specific types of students, and in particular students with special needs.
- Policies for detecting difficulties, providing tools for success and supporting the various types of students are defined and implemented within teaching entities.
- Students are prepared for employment throughout their studies. The institution also tracks employment.
- The institution maintains contact with its alumni and uses their feedback to continuously improve its programmes.
- The institution implements varied and consistent initiatives for involving the business and sociocultural sectors in its policy to support employment.

Standard 2: The institution's governance methods include the active participation of students at different levels

- The institution supports and recognises student involvement in governance and the life of associations and cultural and sports activities.
- Students are involved in the institution's teaching policy and its management bodies. They are active participants in evaluation and internal quality management.

Field 2: Learning resources

Standard: The institution implements a document resources policy that supports its research and teaching activities

- The institution knows its document resources and has a full cataloguing system which is kept up to date and accessible.
- The diversification of document resources (in particular digital resources) complies with research and teaching needs.
- Technical and software infrastructure, contribute to ensuring the quality of service.

Field 3: Learning environment

Standard: The institution helps create a learning environment that is favourable to students.

- The institution develops a student quality of life strategy that includes student services and accommodation, cultural and sports activities, and health and preventive medicine services.
- Student life actions are managed by and well-known to students.
- The policy for allocating financial, material and human resources to student life reflects the institution's commitments and involves students.

Area 4: External relations

Field 1: Partnership policy

Standard: Partnerships are part of the institution's strategy

- The institution has defined a partnership strategy adapted to its objectives and environment.
- The main partnerships (with higher education institutions or research bodies, regions and business and sociocultural sectors) are identified, organised and monitored.
- In some cases, external partnerships are involved in the governance of the institution.

Field 2: International relations

Standard 1: An international strategy is defined and adapted to the objectives of the institution

- The institution has defined an international strategy. The way in which it is managed is identified and involves the institution's main entities on the basis of a clear definition of the roles of the various players.
- The institution knows the joint actions being performed, has the tools required for monitoring them, and mobilises appropriate means of support.

Standard 2: The international strategy implemented is based on internationalisation mechanisms that meet the needs of the institution

- For research, the institution supports multilateral cooperation (projects and contracts).
- The institution has an internationalisation development policy for its study programmes (teaching in foreign languages, hosting foreign teachers, double degrees, joint degrees, etc.) which promotes cultural diversity.
- The institution encourages and supports international inbound and outbound mobility both students and staff.

Area 5: Management

Field 1: The institution's finances

Standard 1: The institution uses multi-year planning to manage its resources

- The institution organises the annual allocation of its operating resources based on forecasting assessments.
- The institution has a well-defined policy for diversifying its financial resources in connection with its economic and sociocultural environment.

Standard 2: The budget acts as a lever for the strategy and management of the institution

- The budget is consistent with the institution's strategic priorities and its capacity to manage its financial situation.
- The institution has cost analysis and management control tools.

Field 2: The institution's human resources

Standard: The institution defines a human resources management policy adapted to its objectives

- The institution develops a forward-looking approach to managing jobs and skills.
- The institution knows and manages its total wage bill. It develops forecasting assessment tools and has adequate financial information.
- A policy on support and training for professors and administrative staff is implemented.
- Staff evaluations and recruitment methods follow formally defined and published procedures that ensure equal treatment, transparency and compliance with ethical standards and consistency with the institution's strategy.
- The institution complies with statutory regulations and obligations regarding health and safety and working conditions.

Field 3: IT system

Standard: The institution is managed with the support of a full and consistent IT system

- The IT system is consistent with the institution's strategy, and relevant to its internal organisation, needs and resources.
- The institution has management applications, databases and indicators to meet its management needs, both centrally and for its internal bodies.
- The institution develops effective IT infrastructure and services adapted to its missions that contribute to the achievement of its objectives.
- The IT system serves as a quality assurance policy tool.

Field 4: Real estate owned by the institution

Standard: The institution has a logistics and real estate policy adapted to its needs

- The institution knows the conditions of its premises, monitors their use, identifies their maintenance needs and ensures that its real estate investments are properly made.
- The premises are adapted for students and staff with special needs under specific actions which are planned and overseen by the institution.
- The institution conducts prospective analyses of its needs and adapts its real estate policy accordingly.

Area 6: Quality and ethics

Field 1: Quality and continuous improvement policy

Standard: The institution pursues a quality assurance policy adapted to its strategy

- The quality assurance policy is led by the management team and shared internally. It defines objectives and adapted methods which are published.
- The institution organises monitoring of the results of its activities in conjunction with relevant self-evaluation, periodic external evaluation and prospective analysis mechanisms. It implements effective corrective actions.
- The institution allocates the necessary financial and human resources to support its quality policy.
- Continuous improvement is part of the institution's strategy.

Field 2: Ethics and professional standards

Standard: The institution pursues an ethics and professional standards policy

- The institution has defined its values and promotes them.
- The governance rules are defined, clear and known.
- The institution has defined anti-fraud and/or anti-corruption measures.
- The institution promotes equal treatment of its staff and students.
- The institution has implemented appeal procedures in the event of unethical conduct.

Appendices

HCERES and ESG correlation table

ESG	Evaluation of study programmes	Evaluation of institutions
1.1 Policy for quality assurance	4-6	6-1, 6-2, 1-1-3
1.2 Design and approval of programmes	1-1, 1-2, 3-1 3-2	2.2.1, 2.2.2,
1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	3-1, 3-4, 3-6, 3-7, 4-2, 4-3	2.2.2, 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 2-2-4
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	4-2, 4-3, 4-4	3-1, 2-2-4
1.5 Teaching staff	4-1, 2-2	5-2, 2-3
1.6 Learning resources and student support	3-6, 3-5, 3-1	2.2.3, 2.2.2, 2-4 2-2-2, 3-2, 3-3
1.7 Information management	4-4, 4-5	5-3, 2-2-5, 3-1
1.8 - Public information	4-4, 4-5	1-3, 2-2-5, 3-1
1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes	4-6	2-2-5, 6-1
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance	4-6	6-1