

PROCEDURE FOR ELECTION OF OBSERVERS FROM THE BFUG TO THE EQAR REGISTER COMMITTEE

1 General background

1.1 EQAR

The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) was set up in March 2008 as an independent Association with the objective of furthering the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by enhancing confidence in higher education and facilitating the mutual recognition of quality assurance results and decisions. For this purpose, EQAR provides a list of quality assurance agencies that operate in substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, as adopted by the European Ministers responsible for higher education in Bergen in May 2005.

The Association has three types of members: the Founding Members EUA, EURASHE, ESU and ENQA (also referred to as E4); the Social Partner Members; and the Governmental Members. At 31 October 2009, the Association had 26 Governmental Members from 25 of the 46 Bologna countries and BUSINESSSEUROPE and Education International as Social Partner Members.

The Association's bodies are:

- The General Assembly
- The Executive Board
- The Appeals Committee
- The Register Committee
- The Secretariat

The General Assembly, which is convened at least once a year, is the highest decision making body. It decides on all matters that are not explicitly assigned to any other body. In particular, it approves the nominations for the Register Committee, elects the members of the Executive Board and of the Appeals Committee, and approves the budget and accounts of the Association. The General Assembly comprises all members of the Association.

1.2 Composition and mandate of the Register Committee

The Register Committee consists of 8 members nominated by the Founding Members, 2 members nominated by the Social Partner Members and a Chair appointed by the Register Committee as additional member. The main task of the Register Committee is to receive, evaluate and decide upon applications for inclusion in the Register. For this purpose, the Register Committee also adopts Procedures for Applications with 2/3 majority and in consultation with the General Assembly; and may adopt Rules of Procedure regulating the details of its operation.

The Register Committee takes its decisions independently of any other body. A member of the Register Committee may not take part in the consideration of any case where s/he has a conflict of interest.

The statutes of EQAR also foresee that the Bologna Follow-Up Group, or any succeeding body, nominates five governmental authorities as observers on the Register Committee.

1.3 Functioning of the Register Committee

General information on the work of the Register Committee (as well as of all other EQAR bodies) is included in regular updates provided by EQAR before each BFUG meeting. After each application round the Register Committee's decisions are presented and explained in a publicly available communiqué by its Chair.

EQAR guarantees confidentiality to all unsuccessful applicants and will avoid publishing any information that might be misleading or misunderstood.

In response to requests by the General Assembly and the Executive Board of EQAR the Register Committee recently presented a more detailed report on its work and the general nature of some of the difficulties encountered, based on the experience with the first two rounds of applications.

The report has been published after the discussion at the General Assembly and can now be downloaded from the EQAR website:

http://www.eqar.eu/fileadmin/documents/eqar/official/RC_02_2_ReportToThe3rdGA_v2_0.pdf

1.4 External evaluation of the Register

As requested by the Ministers in London and Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, the Register will be externally evaluated after two years of operation, in the autumn of 2010, and the report will be presented to the Ministerial conference in Bucharest in 2012. The external evaluation is to analyse the performance of EQAR in fulfilling its mission and the fitness for purpose of its structure. The scope of the evaluation and the organisation still needs to be defined more precisely in the terms of reference. It could be suggested to include the role of the BFUG observers to the Register Committee in this evaluation.

1.5 Period of mandate of the BFUG Observers

Anticipating the official start of EQAR, the BFUG at its meeting in October 2007 held a vote to nominate the five observers. Out of the 12 countries that had put forward their candidatures, Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland and Portugal were elected for a period of two years (2008-2009). At the Stockholm meeting in September 2009, the BFUG agreed to prolong the mandate of those five observers until 30 June 2010 to align it with the mandate of the Register Committee. The observers for the period 1 July 2010 – 30 June 2012 will be elected at the BFUG meeting in Madrid on 18-19 February 2010.

2. Tasks of the BFUG Observers and election procedure

2.1 Role and tasks of the BFUG observers

The role of the Register Committee is to ensure that quality assurance agencies that are registered adhere to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The five BFUG observers attend the meetings of the Register Committee and closely follow the work of the Committee. While the observers do not take part in the Register Committee's deliberations, they may ask questions on the Committee's proceedings and offer their feedback during general discussions. Since the Register Committee presented its report, observers can also report back to BFUG, provided they respect the agreement not to reveal any information that may allow the identification of individual applications. The observers can also be asked by the BFUG to comment on reports presented by the Register Committee, or on their observations in general. Besides, a note in the report of the Register Committee on the observers' behalf could be proposed.

2.2 Replacement and/or re-election of observers

Members of the Register Committee may be re-nominated up to three times. At its meeting in Brussels on 30 November 2009, the BFUG agreed to apply the same rule to the BFUG observers. To ensure a good balance between renewal and continuity, the

BFUG furthermore agreed to reserve at least three of the five places for candidates that at the moment of the election are not observers on the Register Committee yet.

2.3. Election procedure

- 1) All countries participating in the Bologna Process are eligible to stand for election, except those that have already been observers to the Register Committee four times.
- 2) The actual observer nominated by the elected country should be member of the BFUG.
- 3) Nominations will be invited by an agreed deadline.
- 4) A maximum of two countries acting as observers to the Register Committee at the time may be re-elected.
- 5) In the event that more than five countries indicate they would like to become observers to the Register Committee, election will be by vote. Elections will be held at the BFUG meeting immediately prior to the beginning of the mandate of the Register Committee.
 - a. Candidates are all eligible countries that formally expressed their candidature by the agreed deadline;
 - b. Each member of the Bologna Process and represented in the BFUG will receive two voting slips and may vote for up to five nominees on each voting slip;
 - c. The five candidates receiving the highest number of votes on the first ballot will be elected. Should more than two of the candidates standing for re-election be among the five countries to cast the highest number of votes, only the first two (in terms of number of votes) will be taken into account.
 - d. Should two or more countries be tied, a second ballot will be held to determine which of these countries shall be the second re-elected, or the fifth newly elected country.