



## **EQ-Arts**

*Quality Framework: history, mission, standards,  
procedures & regulations*

*June 2020*

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## Introduction

EQ-Arts is a sector-specific, not-for-profit, Foundation that represents a wide range of disciplines within the broad remit of the creative and performing arts and design (CPAD). Its focus is on enhancement-led quality assurance for higher arts education across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and beyond. Within the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) 2015.

Building on the experience gained from [25 years of quality assurance and enhancement<sup>1</sup>](#) (originally founded within the administration of the *European League of the Institutes of Arts [ELIA]* in 1996) EQ-Arts was subsequently established as an independent Foundation under Dutch law on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2015. It is registered at the *Chamber of Commerce* in Amsterdam (reg. no. 63775751) where its offices are based.

EQ-Arts has become a leading voice in discussions about Quality Assurance & Enhancement (QA&E) in higher arts education across Europe and its mission is to become acknowledged as the leading European Quality Agency for Higher Arts Education.

The national and international quality assurance related projects and activities that EQ-Arts has been involved in over the last 25 years, together with the collective experience of the Board members, has provided the organisation with a unique insight into arts education across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This experience has led EQ-Arts to recognise that the sector has developed approaches to curriculum design and pedagogical delivery that offer examples of excellent practice in relation to the Standards embodied in the ESG. For example, the fully committed student-centred approach to learning, teaching and assessment (as reflected in ESG Standard 1.3), is a long-established and well-developed feature of pedagogical practice in the arts. In this, as well as in other areas of higher education practice, the arts sector has much to offer to the wider field of higher education. EQ-Arts is committed to an enhancement-led approach to Quality Assurance in the delivery of Higher Arts Education across the higher education arts field. In undertaking its work, EQ-Arts is mindful of both the clear framework for Higher Education provided by the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) and the key contribution that the creative industries and cultural capital makes to European society and in helping to lay foundations for its future. Therefore, EQ-Arts recognises that the graduates of the diverse range of European Higher Arts Education (EHAE) institutions make significant contributions to the cultural and creative sectors in ways that promote and have significant impact on both social and economic development.

## Quality Aims and Values

### Vision

EQ-Arts aims to be the leading provider of quality assurance and enhancement services to higher education institutions in the CPAD sector in Europe. While recognising academic and cultural diversity across the sector it will work to establish benchmark standards that help to assure and enhance the quality of academic provision, and the student learning experience, in an international context. Through this work EQ-Arts will be known as an independent and trusted contributor to the CPAD sector, working constructively and efficiently with higher education institutions and national agencies. So, it will engender public confidence in the

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<sup>1</sup> see EQ-Arts website [www.eq-arts.org](http://www.eq-arts.org) - List of Activities

quality and value of higher education in the respective disciplines of the CPAD. Alongside this EQ-Arts will also work to advance the sector's capacity for high quality third cycle provision and to stimulate CPAD research that drives the knowledge gained from research back into the teaching curriculum, to enhance the student experience and benefit communities outside the academy.

## Mission

EQ-Arts embraces the underpinning principles of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) 2015 and will work to fully embed the common framework for Quality Assurance. In particular, that Quality Assurance processes should:

- be the primary responsibility of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in assuring the quality of their own provision
- be responsive to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students;
- support the development of a quality culture;
- take into account the needs and expectations of students, other stakeholders and society.

Within the fields of CPAD across the EHEA the specific mission of EQ-Arts is to:

- promote a strong quality culture for excellence and its continuous enhancement;
- help guarantee the equivalence of minimum threshold standards for any academic qualification offered in the EHEA;
- continually enhance the student learning experience to achieve the highest standards;
- encourage the transfer of knowledge gained through staff research back into teaching;
- instil trust and confidence in the processes of quality assurance and enhancement;
- help to build institutional capacity for high quality internal review and enhancement.

## Integrity and Values

The activities undertaken by EQ-Arts are based on the governing principle that all institutions will be treated fairly and equally in having open access to the professional knowledge and experience of EQ-Arts. Therefore, the mission of EQ-Arts is to assure and enhance quality across the CPAD sector as a whole in ways that are even-handed and impartial.

EQ-Arts applies these principles in ways that respect the unique characteristics of higher arts education and honours the diversity of institutions in which the study of arts practice (in all its variants) is offered.

EQ-Arts recognises and upholds the following values:

1. EQ-Arts believes all activities involving institutions, programmes and stakeholders of the European Higher Arts Education sector must start from a position of trust and EQ-Arts aims to strengthen this and ensure a co-ordinated, bottom-up approach to them.
2. EQ-Arts is well connected to and known by the European Higher Arts Sector for its commitment to and respect for the sector's autonomy.

3. EQ-Arts fully recognises the needs of society and the world of work for the development of creativity and generative critical thinking, which are key attributes of higher arts education.
4. EQ-Arts stresses its commitment to value and promote cultural, artistic, and pedagogical diversity.

EQ-Arts firmly safeguards its independence as an organisation and of its activities, since it believes this is necessary to be best able to guarantee and enhance the quality of Higher Arts Education.

## Ethics

EQ-Arts has regard to general ethical principles that it applies across all of its higher arts education activities. The EQ-Arts framework is based on the following Four Principles of *ethical behaviour*:

<i>Autonomy</i>	Respecting the decision-making capacities of autonomous persons.
<i>Beneficence</i>	Acting in ways that benefit participants.
<i>Non-maleficence</i>	Avoiding doing harm.
<i>Justice</i>	Distributing benefits and costs fairly, treating all participants equally.

## Activities

The accreditation and review activities undertaken by EQ-Arts will cover the following levels:

<i>Institution</i>	This will focus on the effectiveness of the institution's own quality assurance and enhancement systems to achieve the stated aims and objectives.
<i>Unit</i>	This will focus on the degree to which a Faculty, Department or School is delivering a range of academic provision that meets the academic objectives set out for it.
<i>Programme</i>	This will focus on the degree to which the following programme levels have been able to sustain and enhance their academic provision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-degree Certificate/Diploma;</li> <li>• BA, MA;</li> <li>• MPhil, M.Res, PhD.</li> </ul>
<i>Joint</i>	This may focus on a collaboration between two or more institutions seeking to offer, for example, a joint programme leading to a single academic award or, a compact arrangement between a pre-degree certificate/diploma and an undergraduate BA programme.
<i>Research</i>	This will focus on an institution's research capacity as undertaken by its academic employees as well as the development of the institution's own research environment.

## Methods

The approach adopted by EQ-Arts for its quality assurance and enhancement activities is rigorous and impartial. This is based on the following processes—both of which are essential precursors to the formation of robust and reliable quality judgments:

*Assessment* EQ-Arts will use a systematic and formal process of assessment to gather and analyse both quantitative and qualitative information about an institution, an individual programme, or, research activity. The aim is to understand the degree to which it has met its own objectives through the strategies it employs and the design of its academic provision. Assessment is an essential part of all accreditation and review processes.

*Evaluation* To properly evaluate the performance of an institution/programme, EQ-Arts will undertake a systematic, and objective, critical analysis that is based on the evidence resulting from assessment processes (both internal and external). The outcomes of an evaluation process will be quality judgments that underpin the recommendations made in all reports provided by EQ-Arts.

## Assurance

Quality assurance processes will determine the formal and/or legal standing of an academic award or institutional provision. Normally these activities are commissioned by a national accreditation agency or by a self-accrediting higher education institution:

*Accreditation* Accreditation is the evaluation of an institution or a specific educational programme in order to determine the degree to which it will, if approved, meet the minimum threshold standards required to receive a licence to award academic qualifications. Accreditation is normally time-limited with periodic renewal.

*Revalidation* Revalidation is the process of periodic review through which an already accredited programme is judged to continue to be meeting, and to what degree, the threshold standards required for the accredited award. Revalidation, as a process of quality assurance, is also linked to evidence for the actions an institution has taken to deliver quality enhancement of the provision throughout the period since the previous validation, the degree to which this enhancement has been achieved and the strategies in place to further that enhancement.

## Enhancement

Quality enhancement activities are not usually the requirement of any legislative framework but are determined through institutional choice and so commissioned by the institution. They include:

*Review* Review processes are normally conducted on a periodic basis with their primary focus being on quality outcomes. The aim of review is to evaluate the degree to which an institution or programme has been able to quality enhance outcomes from the academic provision that is under review. Quality reviews can be undertaken either as an internal audit by the institution itself or as an external audit conducted by EQ-Arts.

*Audit* Audit processes are normally conducted on a periodic basis with their primary focus being on quality systems. Quality audits aim to determine the degree to which the overall system for quality assurance (not the quality of the outcomes from that system) are meeting, or could meet, stated aims and objectives. At

programme level this can be undertaken either as an internal audit by the institution itself or as an external audit conducted by EQ-Arts. Institutional audits will determine the degree to which the Institution's own procedures and mechanisms ensure quality assurance and quality enhancement. At this level, Institutional audit is normally undertaken by an external agency such as EQ-Arts.

*Benchmarking* Quality benchmarks are external reference points that help institutions to identify their own strengths, weaknesses and best practices. Benchmarks also help to establish meaningful and relevant comparisons between a range of different institutional cultures and academic programmes so facilitating international co-operation between higher education institutions across the CPAD sector. Where an institution is subject to a national qualifications framework this will constitute the benchmarks to be used for comparison.

## Operational Management

EQ-Arts is an autonomous, independent, not-for-profit external quality assurance agency for higher arts education. EQ-Arts is legally established as a Foundation (Stichting), following a process formally concluded in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2015. EQ-Arts, its purpose and statutes are registered in Amsterdam at the Chamber of Commerce<sup>2</sup>. Its current seat of operation is in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

To carry out its activities<sup>3</sup>, EQ-Arts has a clearly defined operational management structure, which comprises of:

- [The Board](#)
- [The Executive Office](#)

Supported by:

- [Expert Peer-Review Register](#)
- [Appeals Committee](#)

### The Board

The EQ-Arts Board is comprised of members who, together, constitute the governing body of the Foundation. To discharge its responsibilities the Board will act independently of all external interests and/or influences, including governments (given its non-governmental status) and other stakeholders. Consequently, members of the Board are appointed in a personal capacity (no Board member is there to represent the interests of an organisation, agency or institution).

The EQ-Arts Board is responsible for the:

- effective implementation and continuous review of the Governance Framework set out here;
- planning of external, independent, periodic reviews of the Board's own performance;
- approval of annual reports/accounts and the appointment of annual auditors;
- preparation and monitoring of a five-year strategic plan;
- approval and monitoring of annual business and operational plans;
- final decision making in all the Board's formal assessment and accreditation processes;
- signing-off of final reports concerning all of the Board's quality assurance activities;
- researching and approving periodic trend analyses drawn from the Board's activities;
- scrutinising and approving applications to join the Board's Register of Peer Reviewers;
- approving the appointment of Review Team Chairs and Members;
- instigating independent reviews of complaints or appeals concerning the Board's activities;
- convening occasional or standing working groups to assist in the Board's work;
- identifying and selecting new Board members and electing a chair.

The constitution of the Board is as follows:

<i>Chair (x1)</i>	Elected from, and by, Board members
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<sup>2</sup> Kamer van Koophandel 63775751

<sup>3</sup> see *EQ-Arts Governance Framework 2020*



<i>Ex-officio (x1)</i>	EQ-Arts Chief Executive Officer <sup>4</sup>
<i>Treasurer (x1)</i>	Appointed by the Board from its members
<i>Secretary (x1)</i>	Appointed by the Board from its members
<i>Members (min2)</i>	Selected from the EQ-Arts Register of Peer Reviewers or by nomination <sup>5</sup> & invitation
<i>Student(s) (min1)</i>	Nominated by Higher Education Institutions, Student Union associations or Quality Assurance Agencies
<i>Officer (x1)</i>	EQ-Arts General Manager <sup>6</sup>
<i>Observers (&lt;5)</i>	By invitation from other arts agencies or professional and subject associations aligned with the work of EQ-Arts.

With the exception of the Executive Officer and General Manager all periods of office will be for a period of three years renewable for a maximum of three terms.

A skills audit of all current Board members will be maintained to ensure that the Board's collective responsibilities are fully discharged and that the range of stakeholder interests are properly represented.

### The Executive Office

The Executive Office comprises of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and General Manager, who are both appointed by the Board and who are responsible for the management and day-to-day organisation of the agency, as determined by the Board.

The Executive Office co-ordinates, guides, supports and documents all external activities of EQ-Arts relating to its core processes as well as internal processes such as committee or working group meetings.

### The Expert Peer-Review Register

The Executive Office maintains an annually updated Peer-Review Register of trained experts. Inclusion in the EQ-Arts Register of reviewers will be made through a process of public advertisement and open application. The EQ-Arts website displays an open invitation for teachers, managers and professionals the higher arts education and professional sectors to participate in the annual External QA&E expert training programme. Their application is accompanied by a curriculum vitae (CV), demonstrating experience and engagement in QA practice. After the training programme, the Board considers recommendations from the trainers, set against the selection criteria below, and endorses the successful candidates to be added to the register. Students are also invited through open calls addressed to national and European Students Unions or associations and national QA agencies.

All Board members, and those accepted onto the Register of Peer Reviewers, will be required to declare, and keep up to date, a list of instances where they may have major or minor conflict of interest through completion of the EQ-Arts Conflict of Interest Form.

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<sup>4</sup> Non-voting member

<sup>5</sup> Nominated by International Arts Discipline Networks (e.g. CUMULUS, CILECT, AEC etc.)

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

## The Appeals & Complaints Procedure<sup>7</sup>

### Complaints

*Purpose* :: This complaints procedure will enable an institution to seek remedy for a deviation from, or a failure in, some element of EQ-Arts service delivery as it is set out in this Governance Framework.

*Complaints Committee* :: A Complaints Committee will be comprised of three members drawn from the EQ-Arts Register of Peer Reviewers and be chaired by the EQ-Arts CEO. In composing the Committee, geographical and disciplinary balance will be considered, as well as required expertise and background of the Committee members.

### Appeals

*Purpose* :: The appeals procedure will enable an institution to seek reconsideration of a quality judgement(s) or outcome(s) before publication of the final report.

*Appeals Committee* :: All Appeals (including Complaints that are against the EQ-Arts Board or any of its members) will be heard by an Appeals Committee that is independent of the Board of Governance. This Committee will have a Chair, to be nominated for a period of three years by an independent Subject Association with whom EQ-Arts is formally associated.

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<sup>7</sup> see EQ-Arts Governance Framework (paras. 19&20) *Complaints & Appeals*

## Core Processes

### Formal Institutional & Programme Assessment leading to Accreditation

#### Aims and Quality Goals

EQ-Arts upholds its values guided by the following **beliefs** in carrying out its activities through:

- placing particular emphasis on the enhancement of a student learning experience that supports students to become creative mediators in today’s rapidly changing societies and art communities;
- promoting student-centred approaches to learning, teaching and assessment;
- encouraging the constructive alignment of teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks;
- encouraging institutions to develop and enhance a quality culture which guides their mission and vision;
- adopting a review methodology based on peer review, in which the participation of students, relevant professional bodies and/or employers as stakeholders is embedded;
- ensuring that explicit criteria and transparent processes underpin all its activities;
- ensuring that its processes are open to external scrutiny;
- recognising a range of external and international reference points and/or criteria (primarily guided by the ESG 2015);
- ensuring that the outcomes of its processes have formal status, are decided independently and are publicly available.

In order to deliver a high-quality process that adheres to EQ-Arts core values and beliefs the following QA&E measures are carried out in Formal Assessment Reviews.

#### The EQ-Arts Framework for External Quality Assurance (EQA)

In EQ-Arts Framework for EQA following ESG standards are addressed in the following table.

EQ-Arts Self-evaluation report institutional Review	EQ-Arts Self-evaluation report Programme Review	ESG Standards part 1
<p><b>Standard 1. Institutional mission, vision and context</b></p> <p>the institutional mission and vision are clearly stated.</p>	<p><b>Standard 1. Programme’s goals and context</b></p> <p>the programme goals are clearly stated and reflect the institutional mission and aims.</p>	1.1 Policy for QA
<p><b>Standard 2. Educational processes</b></p> <p><b>2.1 The programmes curricula and their methods of delivery:</b></p> <p>the goals of the institution are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes and their methods of delivery.</p>	<p><b>Standard 2. Educational processes</b></p> <p><b>2.1 The curriculum and its methods of delivery:</b></p> <p>the aims of the programme are achieved through the content and structure of the curriculum and its</p>	1.2 Design and approval of programmes 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

<p><b>2.2 International perspectives:</b></p> <p>the institution offers a range of opportunities for students and staff to gain an international perspective.</p> <p><b>2.3 Assessment:</b></p> <p>assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.</p>	<p>teaching &amp; learning methodologies.</p> <p><b>2.2 International perspectives:</b></p> <p>the programme offers a range of opportunities for students and staff to gain an international perspective.</p> <p><b>2.3 Assessment:</b></p> <p>assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.</p>	
<p><b>Standard 3. Student profiles</b></p> <p><b>3.1 Admission/Entrance qualifications:</b></p> <p>there are clear criteria for student admission, based on an assessment of their artistic/academic suitability for the institution's study programmes.</p> <p><b>3.2 Student progression, achievement and employability:</b></p> <p>the institution has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.</p>	<p><b>Standard 3. Student profiles</b></p> <p><b>3.1 Admission/Entrance qualifications:</b></p> <p>there are clear criteria for student admission, based on an assessment of their artistic/academic suitability for the programme.</p> <p><b>3.2 Student progression, achievement and employability:</b></p> <p>the programme has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.</p>	<p>1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification</p>
<p><b>Standard 4. Teaching staff</b></p> <p><b>4.1 Staff qualifications and professional activity:</b></p> <p>members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/researchers.</p> <p><b>4.2 Size and composition of the teaching staff body:</b></p>	<p><b>Standard 4. Teaching staff</b></p> <p><b>4.1 Staff qualifications and professional activity:</b></p> <p>members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/researchers.</p> <p><b>4.2 Size and composition of the teaching staff body:</b></p>	<p>1.5 Teaching staff</p>

there is sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programme.	there is sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programme.	
<p><b>Standard 5. Facilities, resources and support</b></p> <p><b>5.1 Facilities:</b></p> <p>the institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programme.</p> <p><b>5.2 Financial resources:</b></p> <p>the institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the programme.</p> <p><b>5.3 Support staff:</b></p> <p>the institution has sufficient qualified support staff.</p>	<p><b>Standard 5. Facilities, resources and support</b></p> <p><b>5.1 Facilities:</b></p> <p>the institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programme.</p> <p><b>5.2 Financial resources:</b></p> <p>the institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the programme.</p> <p><b>5.3 Support staff:</b></p> <p>the programme has sufficient qualified support staff.</p>	1.6 Learning resources and student support
<p><b>Standard 6. Communication, organisation and decision-making</b></p> <p><b>6.1 Internal communication process:</b></p> <p>effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the institution.</p> <p><b>6.2 Organisational structure and decision-making processes:</b></p> <p>the institution has an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.</p>	<p><b>Standard 6. Communication, organisation and decision-making</b></p> <p><b>6.1 Internal communication process:</b></p> <p>effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programme.</p> <p><b>6.2 Organisational structure and decision-making processes:</b></p> <p>the programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and decision-making processes.</p>	1.7 Information management
<p><b>Standard 7. Internal Quality Culture:</b></p>	<p><b>Standard 7. Internal Quality Culture:</b></p>	1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

the institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.	the programme has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.	
<p><b>Standard 8. Public interaction</b></p> <p><b>8.1 Cultural, artistic and educational contexts:</b></p> <p>the institution engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.</p> <p><b>8.2 Interaction with the artistic professions:</b></p> <p>the institution actively promotes links with various sectors of the creative industries and other artistic professions</p> <p><b>8.3 Information provided to the public:</b></p> <p>information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent and accurate.</p>	<p><b>Standard 8. Public interaction</b></p> <p><b>8.1 Cultural, artistic and educational contexts:</b></p> <p>the programme engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts</p> <p><b>8.2 Interaction with the artistic professions:</b></p> <p>the programme actively promotes links with various sectors of the creative industries.</p> <p><b>8.3 Information provided to the public:</b></p> <p>information provided to the public about the programme is clear, consistent and accurate</p>	1.8 Public information

### Preliminary Information and Contract

Once an institution expresses its interest in having a quality review carried out, the Executive Office will co-ordinate a preliminary information visit to the institution in order to establish clarity with the institution about the goals and scope of the process.

Before starting a review, a contract will be signed confirming the goals and scope of the review, the time frame, the responsibilities of both partners, as well as cost and billing arrangements. The contract is signed by EQ-Arts CEO and an authorised signatory on behalf of the institution.

### Selection of the Peer Review Panel

The Board, with guidance from the Executive Office, endorses the Chairperson of the review panel, from the current EQ-Arts Peer-Review Register, who has the necessary experience to fulfil the role of a Chair as specified in the *Code of Conduct* and *Composition of the Evaluation Teams*<sup>8</sup>.

In collaboration with the Executive Office, the Chair will propose the other members of the Review Team, also drawn from the Peer-Review Register, to the Board. Team members will

<sup>8</sup> see *EQ-Arts Governance Framework* (para. 16 pp.9-10)

be selected from individuals listed in the EQ-Arts Register of Peer Reviewers. The constitution of Teams will have a balanced mix of gender, geographic spread, arts discipline specific knowledge, general experience of QA&E, academic experience in Higher Arts Education and experience of the professional world. This spread of expertise will normally include institutional management and governance, artistic and academic management and artistic and professional experience. Knowledge of the country-specific system of higher arts education and of the legislation applicable will be addressed where possible and as appropriate. All Teams will include a student member.

Team membership will be comprised of individuals who represent stakeholder groups and are listed in the EQ-Arts Peer Review Register as follows:

Chair	x1
Reviewers	x1 or more
Student representative	x1
Secretary	X1

### Training of the Peer Review Panel

Assuring the quality and experience of peer reviewers commissioned by EQ-Arts is a major priority. Consequently, EQ-Arts offers training courses that are specifically designed to enable participants to adapt a range of skills to form a competence to work as an international peer-review expert in the field of external QA (*in line with the ESG 2015 guidelines*) and to be familiar with current policy developments in higher education quality assurance.

This training also aims to ensure an adequate level of consistent knowledge across the EQ-Arts community of peer reviewers in terms of EQ-Arts own processes and its standards for quality assurance and enhancement. The peer review training will also help to build the collective expertise and coherence of the CPAD international community of practice.

Specifically, the training is designed to:

- familiarise participants with the ESG 2015 for Quality Assurance in the EHEA;
- engage participants in processes of evidence analysis and in the development of strategic approaches to the evaluation of internal QA processes;
- involve participants in a close simulation of an external international peer-review QA process;
- adapt the communication and teamwork skills of participants to the specific context of international external QA review processes;
- involve participants in simulated processes of the formulation and framing of recommendations and commendations;
- familiarise participants with the procedures and processes adopted by EQ-Arts.

### Self-Evaluation Report (SER)

The production of the SER is guided by the EQ –Arts *Institutional & Programme SER* templates<sup>9</sup>. EQ-Arts is highly conscious to balance the need for clarity and evidence with the demands associated with the production of additional documentation and associated issues of translation for the institution.

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<sup>9</sup> See Annex 29 EQ-Arts SER template for Institutional Review & Annex 31 EQ-Arts SER template Programme Review, available on [www.eq-arts.org](http://www.eq-arts.org)

The EQ –Arts *Institutional & Programme SER* templates cover each of the current ESG standards. This is augmented by series of questions and indicative types of evidence that could be asked/provided in each section of the template, designed to ensure that the review process covers the particular issues and demands of higher art education as set out in the core beliefs of EQ-Arts. The SER template encourages the institution/programme to discuss how it has dealt with past challenges and to demonstrate any recent improvements it has instigated.

The Executive Office will act as liaison and establish clear lines of communication between the institution/programme and the Chair who liaises with the Review Team.

### **On-Site Visit(s)**

The site-visit(s) to the institution will be carried out in accordance to the EQ-Arts *Codes and Statements* and the EQ-Arts *Review Procedures*<sup>10</sup> which consist of an extensive range of protocols that guide communication, scheduling, evidence gathering, note-taking and documentation and the collegiate comportment of the team, both within its membership and in respect of the institution.

Each visit concludes with oral feedback, which outlines the major points that have been agreed by the Evaluation Team, which will be discussed in more detail within the subsequent written report.

### **The Formal Assessment Report**

The outcomes of all EQ-Arts quality assurance and quality enhancement reviews will be a report written by international subject specialists in the CPAD sector. All such reports will be permanently lodged in the public domain via the EQ-Arts website.

All reports will identify areas of good practice, potential areas for further development and perceived weaknesses. Accreditation and Validation reports will, additionally, include a formal recommendation on the accreditation/validation outcomes along with any conditions or requirements that may, or may not, be attached to these. Should there be any conditions these will be realistically achievable and expressed in such a way that makes clear the timescales for this and what is expected. The institution will have the prerogative to determine what may be the best means to achieve these conditions. If such conditions are not met within the timescales set out, then the recommendation may be not to recommend accreditation or continue validation.

The report also takes full account of the national context of the institution and any other specific circumstances, to ensure that the report does not include external demands that it would be impossible for it to implement (for example actions that are inconsistent with the national laws or statutes that pertain to higher education).

EQ-Arts reports will always consider any steps that have already been taken by an institution in relation to quality assurance and enhancement while also identifying areas of necessary improvement and/or steps towards further enhancements. Reviews and reports will be

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<sup>10</sup> see EQ-Arts *Governance Framework* (paras. 6,7 & 9)



written in a collegial tone with the intention of supporting and encouraging the further development of an institution's quality culture.

Each finding determined by the review is substantiated within the information provided by the institution (including the SER and its appendices) and/or evidence gathered during the Evaluation Team's discussions with the groups of staff, students, graduates and stakeholders during the on-site visits.

Formal Assessment reports are written by, and agreed upon, by all the members of the Evaluation Team. Decisions regarding any conditions and recommendations that are to be included in the report should be agreed unanimously. If any individual member of the team finds that they cannot support a decision regarding any of the conditions and recommendations, they can elect to formulate a substantiated note of dissent to the Board.

Institutions will have opportunity to read a draft copy of the report and comment on any matters of factual error before a final version of the report is approved by the EQ-Arts Accreditation Council.

Institutions have a right to ask for sensitive information to be redacted in the final report before it is published.

### Accreditation Decisions

The Board will base its decisions concerning recommendations, conditions and accreditation on the basis of the recommendations as set out in the report they receive from the Review Teams.

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that any conditions and recommendations arrived at by Review Teams are evidence-based and have been arrived at through the written material (SER, Strategic Plan, Institutional Policies, minutes of meetings, etc.) presented prior to, during, or subsequent to the site visit and/or through the series of meetings held with key stakeholders. The Accreditation Council is ultimately responsible for the guardianship of the principles, guidelines and practices employed by EQ-Arts in its formal assessment and accreditation.

After the set period for making formal appeals has lapsed, the outcomes of the accreditation process and the final reports will be published on the EQ-Arts website.

### Follow-Up Procedure

The EQ-Arts *Follow-up Procedure*<sup>11</sup> is an instrument to guarantee that recommendations and conditions which have been set in the formal assessment reviews are met in an appropriate time in order to ensure the validity of the accreditation process. The procedure is designed to support the on-going enhancement of the quality culture of an institution and allows the institution to demonstrate improvement. EQ-Arts has designed a template<sup>12</sup> for institutions to communicate with EQ-Arts about its progress in order to minimise resources for the institution and ensure a robust, transparent process.

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<sup>11</sup> see Annex 25 *EQ-Arts Review Follow-up Procedure* on the EQ-Arts website [www.eq-arts.org](http://www.eq-arts.org)

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

EQ-Arts current practice provides extensive feedback through an oral report at the end of the final visit to the institution and in a very detailed written report<sup>13</sup> sent to the institution within 15 weeks of the final visit.

Up to a maximum of 15 months after a review the Chair of that review will coordinate a follow-up survey on the implementation and impact of the recommendations and/or conditions made and complete the *EQ-Arts Review Follow-up Report*.<sup>14</sup> These reports are analysed by the Board to see if the institution has addressed the recommendations and/or conditions and help identify any areas and/or trends that could be researched further into.

## Feedback

In order to develop and enhance its own internal QA processes, EQ-Arts has developed a feedback form to gather input from institutions. The forms are sent out by the Executive Office and shared with the Board.

All Review Team members are also invited to complete an evaluation questionnaire for the Board to assess and use for enhancement procedures.

## Collaborating with EQAR registered International and National QA&E Entities

EQ-Arts is open to collaborate and work with EQAR registered international and national QA&E agencies in order to develop QA&E methodologies and tools within the sector as well as carrying out joint Assessment and Accreditation Reviews.

In such cases a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) will be drawn up signed by both parties. The MoA will provide clarity about the division of workload, cost sharing, requirements for the expertise panel members, the process by which panel members will be selected, the guidelines, templates and processes that will be used, as well which accreditation body will make the final decision regarding accreditation.

Both agencies will be asked to evaluate the process and give feedback to EQ-Arts in order to develop and enhance its own processes.

In case of agencies that are not registered by EQAR or have not fully and consistently adopted the ESG, a memorandum of agreement will be signed that ensures that the process delivered by EQ-Arts will adhere to the ESG and in accordance to its own internal standards for Quality Assurance.

EQ-Arts is open to recommend experts for review teams from its Register of Peer-Experts to other EQAR registered agencies as a means of heightening the quality of external QA&E processes in the sector and to maintain collegial relationships with other agencies and organisations. Experts will be asked to share examples of best practice with the Executive Office in order to be included in the review and development of its own methodology and processes.

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<sup>13</sup> see Annexes 30 & 32 *EQ-Arts Institutional and Programme Review Report* templates to be found on the EQ-Arts website [www.eq-arts.org](http://www.eq-arts.org)

<sup>14</sup> see Annex 25 *EQ-Arts Follow-up Procedure & Report* template to be found on the EQ-Arts website [www.eq-arts.org](http://www.eq-arts.org)

## Enhancement Activities

Quality enhancement activities are not usually the requirement of any legislative framework but are determined through institutional choice and so commissioned by the institution. They include:

- Review** Review processes are normally conducted on a periodic basis with their primary focus being on quality outcomes. The aim of review is to evaluate the degree to which an institution or programme has been able to quality enhance outcomes from the academic provision that is under review. Quality reviews can be undertaken either as an internal audit by the institution itself or as an external audit conducted by EQ-Arts.
- Audit** Audit processes are normally conducted on a periodic basis with their primary focus being on quality systems. Quality audits aim to determine the degree to which the overall system for quality assurance (not the quality of the outcomes from that system) are meeting, or could meet, stated aims and objectives. At programme level this can be undertaken either as an internal audit by the institution itself or as an external audit conducted by EQ-Arts. Institutional audits will determine the degree to which the Institution's own procedures and mechanisms ensure quality assurance and quality enhancement. At this level, Institutional audit is normally undertaken by an external agency such as EQ-Arts.
- Benchmarking** Quality benchmarks are external reference points that help institutions to identify their own strengths, weaknesses and best practices. Benchmarks also help to establish meaningful and relevant comparisons between a range of different institutional cultures and academic programmes so facilitating international co-operation between higher education institutions across the CPAD sector. Where an institution is subject to a national qualifications framework this will constitute the benchmarks to be used for comparison.

The mission of EQ-Arts is to assure and enhance quality across the CPAD sector as a whole in ways that are even-handed and impartial. *"In this latter respect, EQ-Arts does not accept, or enter into, exclusive contracts with individual institutions for paid 'consultancy' where the purpose is to prepare for a forthcoming formal assessment to be carried out by EQ-Arts or to improve the academic provision to create a competitive advantage that would compromise the ability of EQ-Arts to form an independent judgment on the quality of that provision."*<sup>15</sup>

## Support of Enhancement Activities

In order to ensure consistency and the highest standard of delivery the Executive Office coordinates all non-formal assessment/enhancement activities.

- It liaises with clients about the content and issues to be addressed
- it selects trainers from the Expert Register
- it approves all documents and training material which will be used by trainers
- it liaises with the institution about matters of logistics and billing

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<sup>15</sup> see EQ-Arts Governance Framework (p.2 para 6.2)

## Feedback

In order to develop and enhance its process EQ-Arts has developed feedback forms to gather input by the institutions. The forms are sent out by the Executive Office and are shared with the trainer and the Board.

## Review and Development of Core Processes

In order to enhance its core processes, the Board regularly reviews all published guidelines, templates, training and consulting material as well as the internal QA&E measures described in this document.

To this end the Board establishes working groups, on a bi-annual basis, who review EQ-Arts processes in relation to relevant external parameters (such as the ESG, EQF, national QA&E frameworks and guidelines), examples of international best practice in external QA&E and the feedback gathered from institutions and clients. The working groups set up by the Board may include external experts as necessary.

The working groups formulate recommendations for amendments and changes to processes, documents and materials, which are presented to the EQ-Arts Board for approval.

EQ-Arts internal and external QA&E processes are periodically reviewed externally in accordance to EQAR regulations.