

Approval of the Application

by SKVC - Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC)
for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register

Register Committee

Ref. RC20/A48

Ver. 1.0

Date 2017-11-21

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Application of:	11/07/2016
Agency registered since:	03/12/2012
External review report of:	21/06/2017
Review coordinated by:	European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)
Review panel members:	Jacques Lanarès (chair, academic), Michèle Wera (secretary), Saulius Vengris, Marija Vasilevska (student)
Decision of:	16/11/2017
Registration until:	30/06/2022
Absented themselves from decision-making:	N/A
Attachments:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of eligibility, 26/07/2016 External Review Report, 30/06/2017

1. The application of 11/07/2016 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 26/07/2016 having considered clarification received from SKVC on 20/07/2016.
3. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 21/06/2017 on the compliance of SKVC with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).

Analysis:

4. In considering SKVC's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account the *external evaluation and accreditation of study programmes and higher education institutions* and *the evaluations to determine HEI's eligibility to offer higher education*.
5. Activities related to SKVC's national ENIC/NARIC office are not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to registration on EQAR.
6. The Register Committee found that the report provides sufficient evidence and analysis on SKVC's level of compliance with the ESG.

7. With regard to the specific European Standards and Guidelines, the Register Committee considered the following:

ESG 2.4: Peer-Review Experts

In its decision of inclusion, the Register Committee flagged the involvement of students in all external review expert groups.

The panel's findings showed that students participate in all SKVC's expert teams for all types of evaluations, whether in Lithuania or abroad. In its interviews the panel also learned that students were not always involved equally in the external review process, an issue that was mostly depended on the chair of the team (Review report pg. 36).

The Register Committee noted that SKVC involved students in all its reviews and has therefore addressed the flag. While the Committee concurred with the panel's conclusion of compliance, the Committee nevertheless underlined the panel's recommendation that SKVC could play a more supportive role in ensuring that students participate as equal members in all panels.

ESG 2.5: Criteria for outcomes

In its decision of inclusion, the Register Committee flagged the decision-making processes of the agency for accreditation and the practice in which accreditation decisions are taken by a single person (the Director).

The panel noted that accreditation decisions are taken by the SKVC director upon advice of one of the two advisory commissions. In the view of the panel the role of the advisory commission should be limited to checking the reliability of the outcomes of the evaluation, leaving the final decision to the director to avoid unnecessary costly and complicated processes.

While the Register Committee found that SKVC has addressed the flag and concurred with the review panel's conclusion of compliance, the Committee nevertheless underlined the panel's recommendation concerning the improvement of the agency's criteria for programme accreditation with more elaborate definitions of its scores.

ESG 2.6: Reporting

In its decision of inclusion, the Register Committee flagged the publication of reports corresponding to applications by new programmes and new licensing requests.

The panel's finding show that the evaluation reports for programme and institutional evaluations are published and accessible on the SKVC website, including the accreditation decisions (p. 40).

The Register Committee therefore concluded that the flag has been addressed and concurred with the review panel's conclusion of compliance.

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ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals

While the Register Committee noted that appeals' procedures are well defined, accessible and handled adequately, the Register Committee noted that SKVC's methodologies and principles do not cover complaints.

The panel did not find how higher education institutions can raise issues of concerns or how they are handled by SKVC in a professional and consistent manner.

The Committee underlined the recommendation of the panel for the development of a specific complaints procedure that should be made easily accessible to higher education institutions. **Given the absence of a complaints procedure the Committee was unable to concur with the review panel's conclusion of compliance and considered that SKVC complies only partially with standard 2.7.**

ESG 3.1: Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

The Register Committee noted that SKVC provides consulting to both the government and higher education institutions.

While the panel found that SKVC's methodologies and guidelines clearly delineate its tasks and responsibilities, the panel stated that SKVC could benefit from reducing its guidance role in producing self-evaluation reports and in offering detailed and demanding rules and regulations for higher education.

While the Register Committee concluded that SKVC is otherwise compliant with ESG 3.1, **the Committee underlined that SKVC is expected to demonstrate a clear separation between its external quality assurance and its consulting and guidance role, in particular considering the agency's assistance in producing self-evaluation reports. The Committee drew SKVC's attention to the guiding principles set out in Annex 5 to the Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG.**

ESG 3.5: Resources

In its decision of inclusion, the Register Committee flagged the financial arrangements and sustainability of SKVC's overall activity.

The panel's analysis showed that these concerns remain due to a wavering financial situation and decrease of project funds.

The Register Committee noted the panel's analysis that the financial arrangements remain uncertain and have not been adequately addressed within a realistic financial plan.

Considering the concerns of the panel, the Register Committee concluded that the flag was not addressed. **The Committee was therefore unable to concur with the review panel's conclusion of**

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compliance but considered that SKVC complies only partially with standard 3.5.

ESG 3.6: Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

In its decision of inclusion, the Register Committee flagged issues related to the systematic collection and analysis by SKVC of both internal and external feedback.

In its analysis the panel showed that SKVC revised its internal QA system in 2012 and in 2016 and that the agency developed a new feedback system and has updated its methodologies, guidelines and evaluation tools.

The Committee noted that the agency made considerable progress in addressing the concerns of the panel and of the Register Committee and therefore concluded that the flag has been addressed and concurred with the review panel’s conclusion of compliance.

- 8. For the remaining standards, the Register Committee was able to concur with the review panel’s analysis and conclusion without further comments.

Conclusion:

- 9. Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that SKVC demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) as follows:

Standard	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Full compliance	Compliance
2.2	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.3	Full compliance	Compliance
2.4	Full compliance	Compliance
2.5	Substantial compliance	Compliance
2.6	Full compliance	Compliance
2.7	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance
3.1	Full compliance	Compliance
3.2	Full compliance	Compliance
3.3	Full compliance	Compliance
3.4	Substantial compliance	Compliance
3.5	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance
3.6	Full compliance	Compliance
3.7	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

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10. The Register Committee considered that SKVC only achieved partial compliance with some standards. In its holistic judgement, the Register Committee concluded that these are specific and limited issues, but that SKVC continues to comply substantially with the ESG as a whole.
11. The Register Committee therefore renewed SKVC's inclusion on the Register. SKVC's renewed inclusion shall be valid until 30/06/2022¹.
12. The Register Committee further underlined that SKVC is expected to address the issues mentioned appropriately and to resolve them at the earliest opportunity.

¹ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

