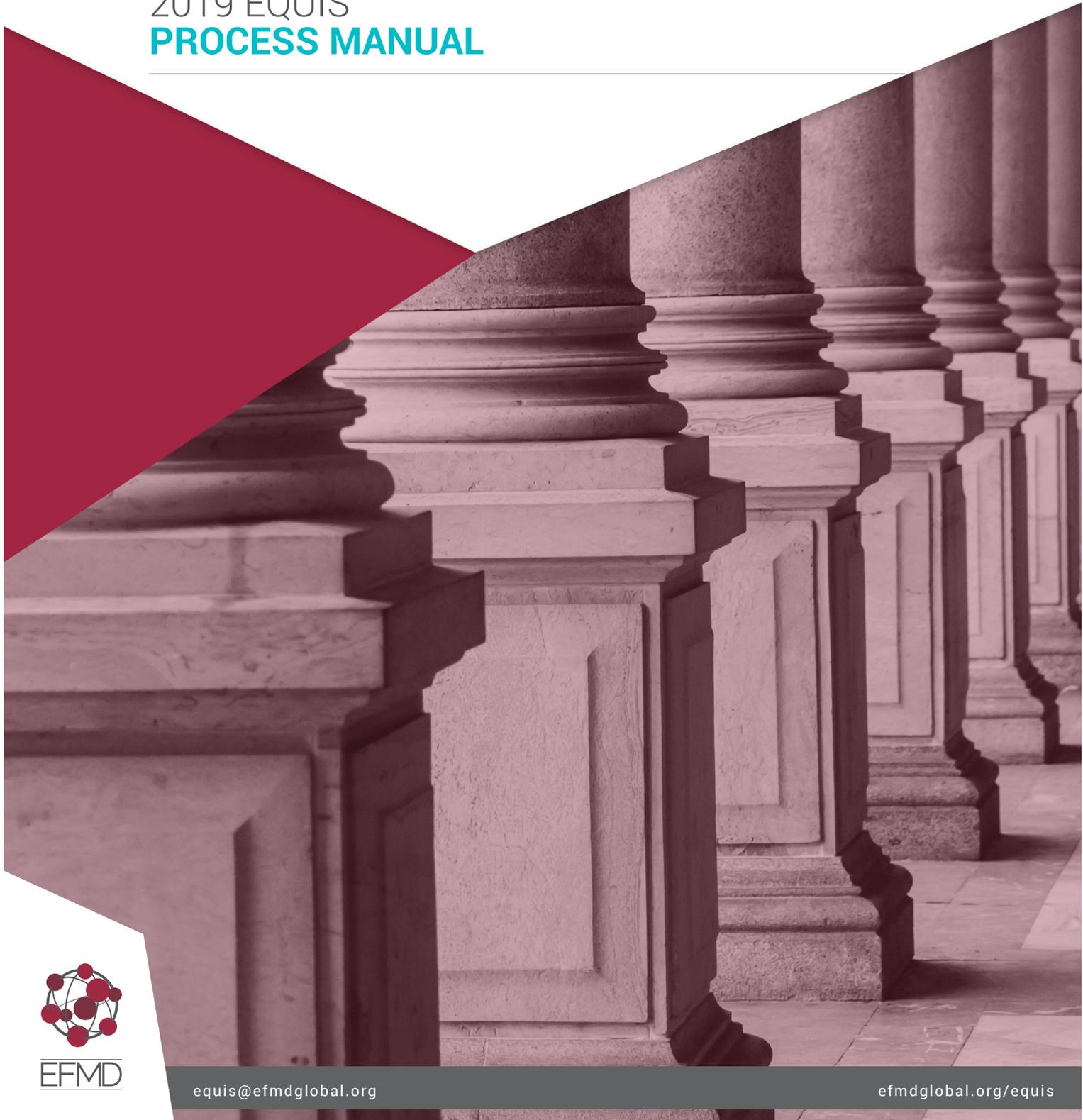




## EFMD Quality Improvement System

The EFMD Accreditation for International Business Schools

# 2019 EQUIS PROCESS MANUAL



## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AB	Accreditation Board
DS	Datasheet
EOCCS	EFMD Online Course Certification System
EPAS	EFMD Programme Accreditation System
EQUAL	European Quality Link
EQUIS	EFMD Quality Improvement System
ERS	Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MBA	Master of Business Administration
PRT	Peer Review Team
PRV	Peer Review Visit
QA	Quality Assurance
QP	Quality Profile
QS	Quality Services
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning

### Document Version 2019<sup>1</sup>

We will ensure the confidentiality of data provided to EFMD and processed in the framework of the EQUIS accreditation system. In comparative benchmarking tools, your School's data is only reported in aggregate, such that no individual school's data is identifiable.

Learn more about our privacy policy at <https://efmdglobal.org/privacy-policy/>.

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<sup>1</sup> The EQUIS documents are revised periodically and it is the responsibility of the School to always use the latest version of the document. Older versions of the EQUIS document set are only an acceptable reference with the prior approval from the EQUIS Office. EQUIS documents are updated annually at the beginning of each calendar year.

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## **Section 1: INTRODUCTION TO EQUIS**

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### **EQUIS – the EFMD Quality Improvement System**

EQUIS is an international system of strategic review, quality improvement and accreditation for the assessment of schools<sup>2</sup> in widely different national contexts. Although originally inspired by the special needs imposed by extreme cultural diversity in Europe, the EQUIS standards for international management education apply to schools in any cultural environment in any region.

The EQUIS scheme was launched in 1997 by EFMD and was designed through a process of close co-operation between existing national accreditation bodies in the field of management education, working collectively within the association called EQUAL (the European Quality Link). The fundamental concepts that lie behind the scheme are, therefore, quite different from those underpinning traditional, national accreditation schemes. The EQUIS model remains a uniquely international construct, designed to provide a framework to embrace diversity and to offer schools a powerful tool for their cross-border development.

#### **Giving diversity a framework**

A truly international quality assessment scheme has to combine the need for commonly agreed standards with the need to respect the diversity of national systems. It has to consider the educational and cultural environment in which the School operates and relate it to the wider international context. This necessitates a more judgemental approach, effectively ruling out classical, single-context compliance schemes. Most important, there is no emphasis placed on any particular model for business schools. EQUIS accredited schools currently range from private business schools focusing on postgraduate and executive education to public university faculties of business and management with a broad portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. An MBA programme is not a pre-condition for entry into the scheme.

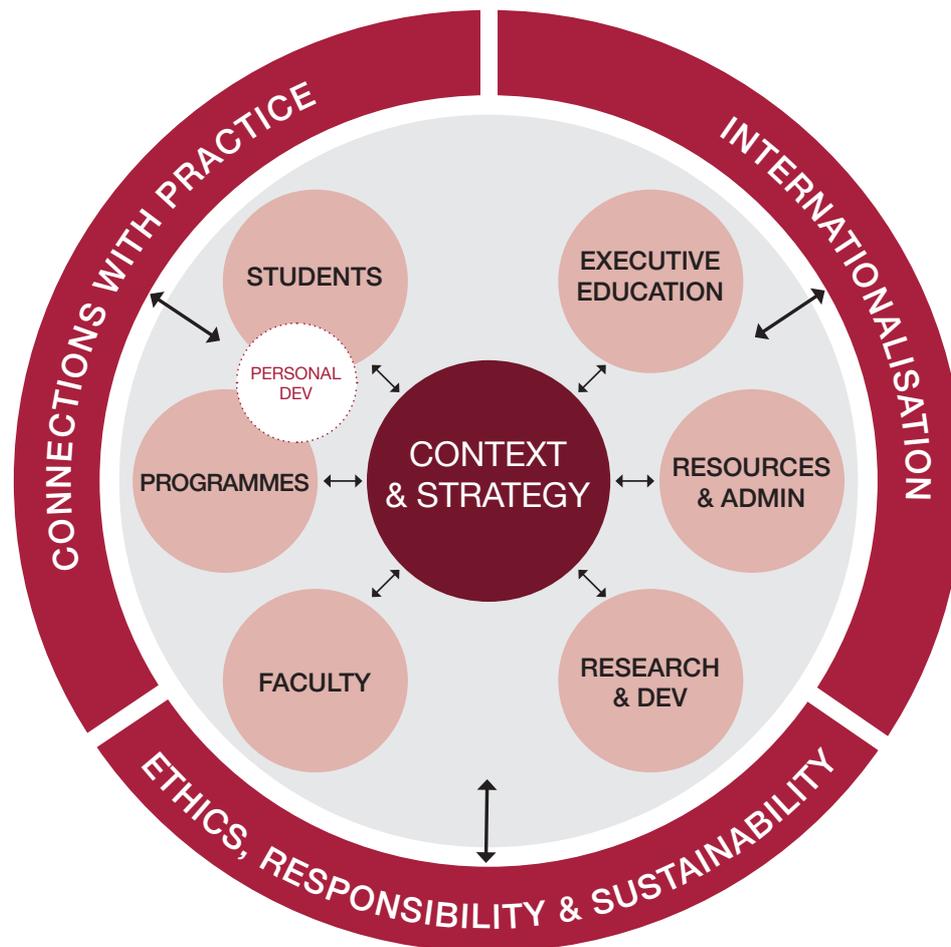
#### **Providing a flexible development tool**

EQUIS is, however, much more than an accreditation scheme. It was conceived, as its name indicates, as a quality improvement system, providing the unique combination of accreditation as a recognition of high international quality and a full strategic review regarding a school's future development. The scheme is designed to approach quality as an ongoing process in which schools benchmark each other's performance and open their doors to evaluation by peers and professional stakeholders.

The EQUIS assessment framework is organised into ten key interrelated areas as shown in the figure below. Each of these areas is the subject of a separate chapter in the document entitled ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria***.

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<sup>2</sup> Defined as the organisational entity providing business and management education (a Faculty, School or Department within a university or a free-standing business school). See Introduction to the EQUIS Standards and Criteria document for a full definition.

**Figure 1: EQUIS Standards and Criteria**

The principal features of the EQUIS process can be summarised as follows:

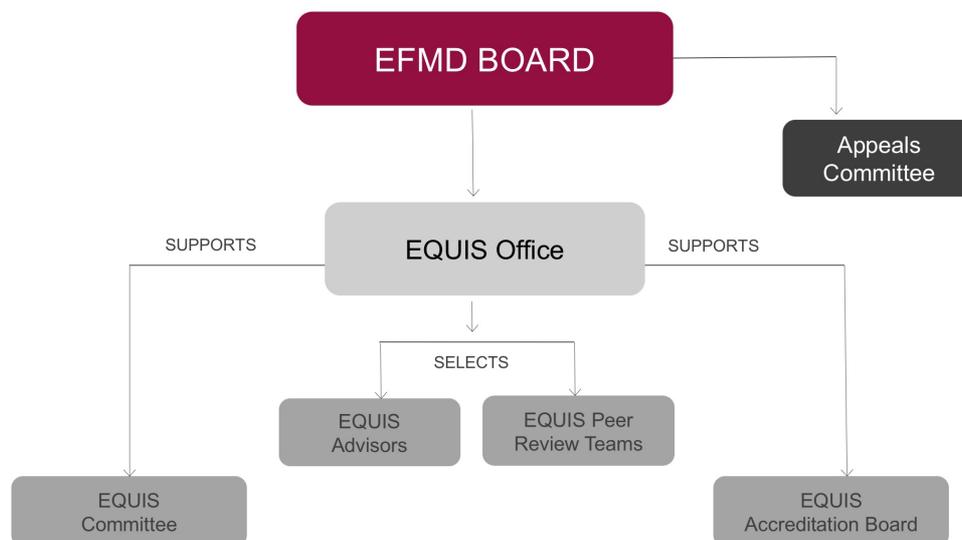
- EQUIS evaluates the performance of the School taken as a whole, including all of its programmes.
- EQUIS offers an international and intercultural approach to quality assessment.
- EQUIS recognises the importance of Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability.
- EQUIS places a great emphasis on relevance to the world of practice, both in the standards themselves and in the assessment processes.
- Special attention is paid to Executive Education with a separate chapter devoted to this area (if the School states that it carries out such activities).
- EQUIS stresses the personal development of managers with particular emphasis on the acquisition of entrepreneurial and managerial skills.
- EQUIS uses quantitative and qualitative assessments of business school outcomes.
- EQUIS is conceived as a learning process involving international peers for defining the relevant quality criteria.
- EQUIS is dynamic and forward looking with a concern for encouraging and evaluating innovative approaches to management education.

## Section 2:                    **MANAGEMENT OF EQUIS**

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EQUIS is operated by the Quality Services Department of EFMD with the strategic support of the EQUIS Committee. Final decisions on the granting of EQUIS accreditation are made by a separate EQUIS Accreditation Board based on the recommendations of the Peer Review Teams. Members of both the EQUIS Committee and the EQUIS Accreditation Board are appointed by the Board of EFMD.

**Figure 2: The Management of EQUIS**



### **1. The EFMD Board**

The EFMD Board approves EQUIS policy, standards and procedures based on the proposals submitted by the EQUIS Office after consultation with the EQUIS Committee.

The EFMD Board appoints the members of the Accreditation Board and the Committee (see the EFMD website for current membership). It publishes annually a call for nominations.

The Board is also responsible for handling appeals through an established Appeals Procedure (see Annex 20 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes).

### **2. The EQUIS Office at EFMD**

The EQUIS Office is part of EFMD Quality Services and manages the EQUIS process and provides the administrative services for the system. It is charged with developing and implementing appropriate quality assurance procedures.

### **3. The EQUIS Committee**

The EQUIS Committee, composed of academics and representatives from the world of practice, advises the EQUIS Director on the strategic development of EQUIS. All major decisions concerning policy, standards and procedures are submitted to the EQUIS Committee for consultation.

The EQUIS Committee approves the Eligibility of Schools. Any questions concerning continuing Eligibility are to be resolved by the EQUIS Committee.

The EQUIS Committee meets at least three times a year at the request of the EQUIS Director, who chairs the meetings. A detailed description of the Role and Functioning of the EQUIS Committee and a current Members' list can be consulted on the EFMD website.

### **4. The EQUIS Accreditation Board (AB)**

The EQUIS Accreditation Board is composed of representatives of high profile organisations that are stakeholders in the quality improvement of management education. It evaluates the Peer Review Reports on schools that are seeking EQUIS (re-)accreditation and, based on their recommendations, makes the final decision to confer EQUIS accreditation upon those management education institutions that have demonstrated excellence at an international level.

The AB meets at least three times a year at the request of the EQUIS Office. A detailed description of the Role and Functioning of the EQUIS Accreditation Board and a current Members' list can be consulted on the EFMD website.

### **5. Peer Review Teams**

Each Peer Review Team (PRT) is composed of four members (as indicated in Section 6 of this document - paragraph 1.1) holding senior positions in the world of management education or with substantial experience in this field.

The Peer Reviewers will assess the School on the basis of information provided by the School in a Self-Assessment Report and in the interviews during their visit to the School. The PRT will provide their assessment in a Peer Review Report including a recommendation for accreditation to the EQUIS Accreditation Board.

Section 6 of this document describes the Peer Review process in greater detail.

### **6. EQUIS Advisors**

Schools seeking initial EQUIS accreditation receive guidance and support from EQUIS Advisors. Business schools are often challenged when it comes to

evaluating their readiness to enter the accreditation process or to proceed to the next process stage; they also may require assistance to interpret and meet the demanding EQUIS Standards & Criteria. As a consequence, they may encounter difficulties during the accreditation process, which can be mitigated with more explicit guidance. The Advisory Service is designed to respond to these needs. Advisors provide support and advice so that Schools can manage the accreditation process more effectively, produce accreditation documents with greater clarity and address development shortfalls in need of being remedied prior to proceeding with the accreditation process.

The advisory service is an integral part of the regular accreditation process and administered by the EQUIS Office. Advisors are drawn from a pool of experts comprised of chairs and experienced members of Peer Review Teams as well as former members of accreditation bodies. Advisors volunteer their time as a service to the EQUIS community. A conflict of interest policy ensures that, beyond their assigned tasks, Advisors play no role in the formal accreditation process.

In each stage, the Advisor's role consists of:

- Scoping the advisory needs of the School in terms of understanding the accreditation standards and the developmental requirements to manage the stage of the process successfully.
- Providing input on the basis of an on-going interaction with the School's executive and accreditation teams as well as its wider community (including on-site visits).
- Submitting a report-based evaluation at the end of the accreditation process stage.

EQUIS Advisors will support the School during the Pre-Eligibility and Pre-Review processes, up to an equivalent of maximum four days and six days of work respectively (normally spread over a period of 2 years in each stage). It is however possible that the School or the Advisor may wish to change after completing a stage, in which case the EQUIS Office will assign a different Advisor.

The Advisory Service is managed by the EQUIS Office. This includes the matching of advisory needs and the advisor's experience, the interaction between the applicant School and the advisor, and the final reporting. In the pre-eligibility stage, Advisory is optional – offered upon request by the School.

## **7. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Policy**

By participating in the EQUIS process, all individuals involved respect the confidentiality of the information available to them and also agree to declare any potential conflict of interest in accordance with the "Policy on Potential

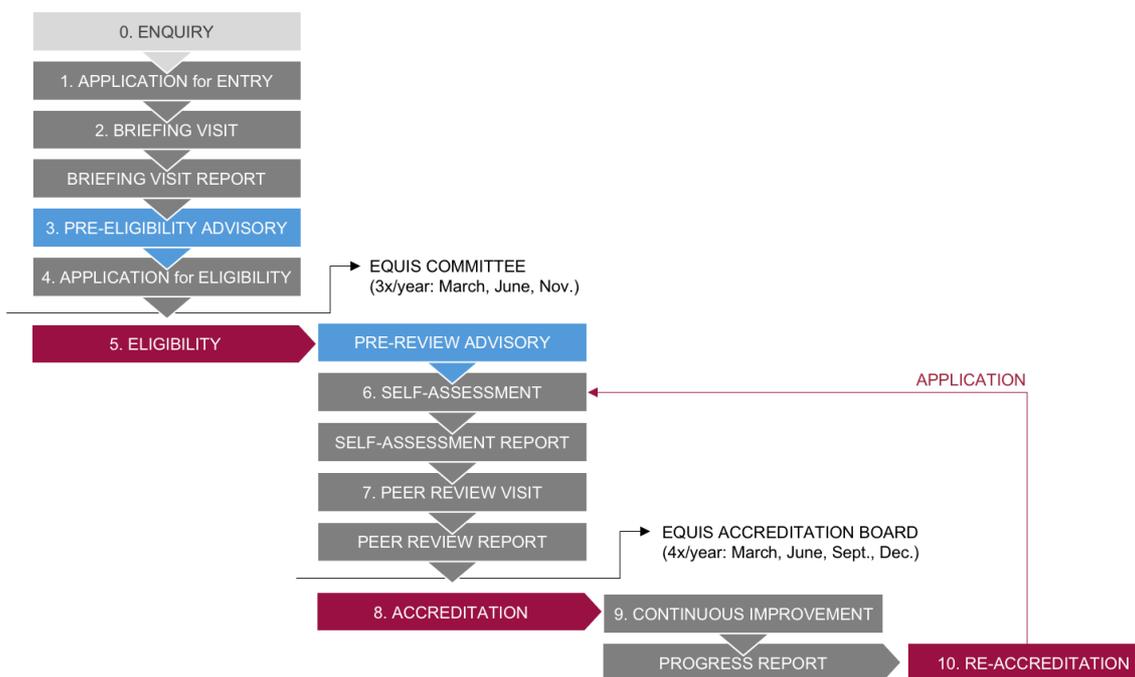
Conflict of Interest for EFMD Peer Reviewers” (see Annex 18). The only information in the public domain is the list of EQUIS accredited schools.

All members of the EQUIS decision-making bodies, Peer Reviewers and Advisors are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement (see Annex 17) and confirm that there is no conflict of interest with the School concerned. The School should inform the EQUIS Office when it is aware of any conflict of interest for any of the proposed Advisors or Peer Review Team members.

## Section 3: THE EQUIS ACCREDITATION PROCESS

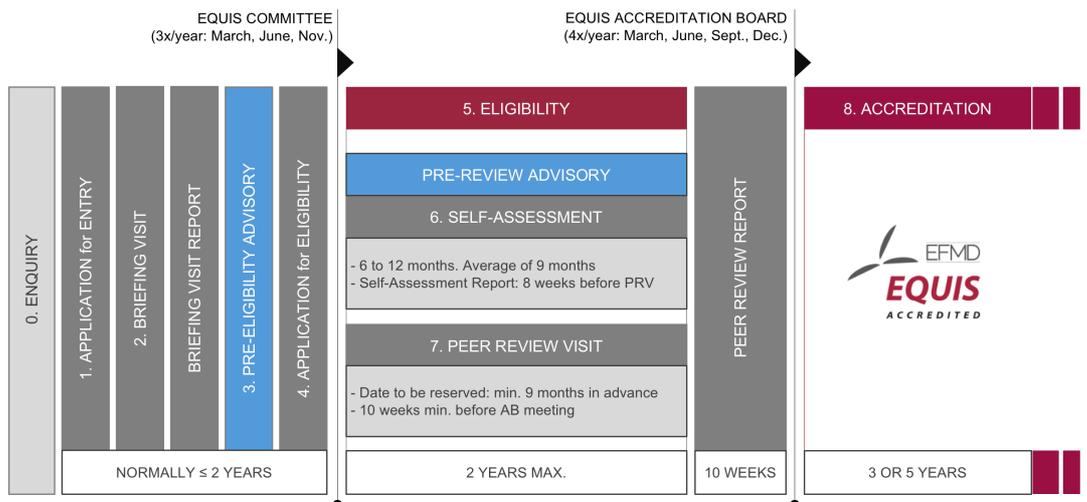
The stages of the EQUIS accreditation process are indicated in the flowchart below.

**Figure 3: EQUIS Process Flow Chart**



**EQUIS is a continuous process** combining strategic institutional development, on-going quality improvement and accreditation. Initial accreditation will typically require 2-3 years and in the most favourable circumstances, may be achieved within 15 months of application. For re-accreditations this process is shorter.

Key timings for the EQUIS process are summarised in Figure 4 and are explained in more detail in the following text.

**Figure 4: EQUIS Key Timings**

The EQUIS accreditation process is composed of several distinct stages:

### Stage 0: Enquiry

This is the first direct contact between the School and EQUIS and precedes the formal application process<sup>3</sup>. It is an informal stage in the process and typically takes place at EFMD events and other conferences where EFMD Quality Services Directors are present, or by email or telephone. It is expected that the School will already have attended one of the many EQUIS seminars and information sessions organised by EFMD in various locations around the world at which the EQUIS system is explained. The School should therefore ensure that it has a basic understanding of EQUIS before meeting one of the QS Directors. This Enquiry stage has proven to be extremely important and schools are recommended to undertake it before submitting the official application forms.

A representative of EQUIS can then clarify with the School any issues or questions about the EQUIS process. The School should provide basic information, preferably as a draft Datasheet, to the EQUIS representative so that non-binding preliminary advice can be offered to the management of the School about the likelihood of being declared Eligible for EQUIS. Indeed, it is preferable for a draft Datasheet (see Annex 2, Process Manual Annexes) to be completed as a way of providing structured information about the School. This is highly recommended (if not essential) as possible issues can be identified at a very early stage.

<sup>3</sup> The standard introductory package of EQUIS documents is available for download on the EFMD website (<https://efmdglobal.org/accreditations/business-schools/equis/equis-guides-documents/>) and consists of

1. EQUIS Standards & Criteria
2. EQUIS Process Manual
3. EQUIS Process Manual Annexes
4. Guidelines & Position Papers: Supporting Material for the EQUIS and EPAS Accreditation Systems

If EQUIS is believed to be appropriate for the School, the EQUIS representative will encourage it to apply for Eligibility.

If it is believed that the School will probably not qualify for Eligibility, it will be informed about the reasons and advised on possible courses of action. Whatever the views offered by the EQUIS representative, they are offered simply as advice. The School can still proceed and the advice offered to the School at this stage will not be part of the information on which subsequent decisions will be based.

### Stage 1: Formal Application for Entry into the EQUIS Process

In order to enter the EQUIS process formally, the School must be a member of EFMD and remain a member during any period of accreditation. The institution may start the formal EFMD membership and EQUIS application processes at the same time. The EQUIS Committee will however only be able to decide upon Eligibility (see stage 5) after the EFMD Membership Review Committee has approved membership.

A School that wishes to enter the EQUIS accreditation process sends an Application Form (Annex 1 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes) to the EQUIS Office and completes a Datasheet (Annex 2 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes) containing succinct factual information about its programmes, activities and organisation. The Datasheet should also be provided to the EQUIS Office in Word format to allow for directly annotated feedback.

The Datasheet is a short questionnaire that sets out factual information about the School and that allows a preliminary assessment of the quality of the School against the EQUIS criteria. The Datasheet is provided to this effect by the EQUIS Office in the standard EQUIS introductory package and can be easily downloaded from the EQUIS pages on the EFMD website.

The Datasheet should be completed in a clear and concise manner and should not exceed 16 pages in length. No additional materials will be accepted, except the applicable annexes specified in the EQUIS documents. When the document is received, the EQUIS Office will analyse it for clarity, consistency and completeness. The EQUIS Office may request further clarification if this appears necessary.

In applying the School is assumed to be familiar with the documents included in the standard EQUIS introductory package. In particular, it is deemed to be familiar with the **EQUIS Standards and Criteria**, the EQUIS Process (as described in this Manual), the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes and the EQUIS Fee Schedule.

(see <https://efmdglobal.org/accreditations/business-schools/equis/equis-guides-documents/>).

## Stage 2: Briefing Visit

Upon receipt of the completed application to enter the scheme, the School will go through a preliminary screening to determine whether there are major obstacles to eventual accreditation and whether accreditation is probable within a reasonable period.

This stage is also designed to make sure that schools enter the EQUIS scheme with a full understanding of both the criteria and the process. It is important to avoid misunderstanding at this early stage so as to forestall the danger of subsequent disappointment and frustration.

A Briefing Visit will be organised by the EQUIS Office as soon as possible and usually not later than three months after receipt of the formal Application for Entry into the EQUIS process. Whenever feasible, the Briefing Visit will take place by means of a half-day visit to the School by an EQUIS expert. Under extraordinary circumstances, the Briefing Visit may take place by videoconference.

The objectives of this Visit are as follows:

- To explain the EQUIS criteria and process in detail.
- To establish a preliminary assessment of the School's standing as regards the EQUIS criteria and to inform the School's management team of difficulties that may arise or shortcomings that could impact on the accreditation decision.
- To prepare a Briefing Visit Report summarising the findings of the EQUIS expert, including the School's Advisory needs, if any.

The Briefing Visit Report serves as a guidance document for Schools and Advisors in preparation of the Formal Application for EQUIS Eligibility.

For further details on the Briefing Visit, please refer to Section 4 of this Manual (see also Annex 4 in the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes for the Briefing Visit Form).

A Briefing Visit may sometimes be suggested by the EQUIS Office to re-applying Schools (having failed to achieve accreditation previously) – see also page 22 of this Manual for guidance on re-applications after non-accreditation.

## Stage 3: Pre-Eligibility with Advisory Service

After sharing the Briefing Visit Report with the School, the EQUIS Office, upon request of the School, assigns an Advisor who supports the School during the stage leading up to the formal Application for Eligibility (Stage 4). Advisory in the pre-eligibility stage is an optional feature of EQUIS and will have a minimum duration of 1 year. The decision to proceed with Pre-Eligibility Advisory will be made at the latest at the time of the Briefing Visit.

The main focus at this stage is to address the developmental needs possibly identified by the Briefing Visitor and to produce an updated Datasheet, which represents the School comprehensively and with sufficient clarity.

For schools that were denied accreditation or that withdrew from the process, it will be possible to work with an Advisor - appointed by EQUIS - if they wish to do so. The previous Peer Review Report will serve as basis for the Advisor.

The pre-eligibility period ends with the resolution of the School or the joint resolution of School and Advisor that the remainder of the accreditation process can be completed within the 2-year Eligibility period. The School can still proceed with the Application for EQUIS Eligibility without the explicit support of the Advisor. Normally, the Application will take place within 2 years from the Formal Application for Entry.

#### **Stage 4: Application for EQUIS Eligibility**

The School applies for Eligibility by submitting a letter or formal email to the EQUIS Office indicating its plan for submission to the EQUIS Committee and a final, updated Datasheet, at the latest one month in advance of the target Committee meeting.

If the School has opted for the Advisory Service, the Advisor is asked to independently submit an Eligibility Evaluation of the School (see Annex 5 in the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes for the Eligibility Evaluation Form). This report follows the general structure of the Briefing Visit Report and concludes with a discussion of the School's principal strengths and risks from an EQUIS perspective. The Report will be shared with the School.

#### **Stage 5: Eligibility**

The EQUIS Committee is responsible for examining all applications and for taking decisions on Eligibility based on the School's Datasheet and the Advisor's Eligibility Evaluation or the Briefing Visit Report.

The EQUIS Committee will declare a School Eligible if it is satisfied that the School meets the criteria set out below:

#### ***The Eligibility Criteria***

##### **1. Institutional Scope**

The School must demonstrate that its activities fall within the scope of institutions covered by the scheme. It must produce evidence that it:

- a. is an EFMD member in good standing; it needs to maintain this status while going through the accreditation process as well as during the entire period of accreditation.

- b. is or is part of a degree awarding institution; institutions with the sole focus on non-degree education cannot be declared eligible, even if they are attached to a higher education institution.
  - c. has a mission which is appropriate for a higher education institution.
  - d. has a primary (and main) focus on management or business administration; all activities with this focus are considered core activities. To a limited extent, a School can engage in non-core activities, which need to complement and support its core activities; other non-core activities are not subject to EQUIS accreditation.
  - e. has reasonable autonomy in formulating and implementing its strategy, in the management of its academic staff and budget and in the design and delivery of its programmes.
  - f. has clear boundaries which make it possible to distinguish it from other units within the wider institutional structure; boundaries refer to management and academic control as well as external recognition by stakeholders and the market at large.
  - g. has academic staff covering the principal management disciplines.
  - h. has been in operation for at least 10 years, which can involve the transition from a previous to the current structure.
  - i. can demonstrate sufficient institutional stability in cases where major structural changes have occurred.
2. Excellent National Standing  
The School is recognised as an institution having excellent standing in its home market. The School should produce evidence that it enjoys significant recognition for excellence in at least two clearly defined areas of activity.
3. International Reputation  
The School is recognised outside its own country.
4. Breadth of Activities  
The School has reasonable breadth in its programme portfolio as demonstrated by presence in at least two of the principal segments (Bachelor, Master, MBA, PhD, Executive Education). The School must also demonstrate substantial engagement in knowledge generation and dissemination.
5. Core Faculty  
The School has a core faculty of at least 25 FTE qualified academics. In all cases, the School must demonstrate that the size of its core faculty is sufficient to support its portfolio of activities and the number of students enrolled in its programmes, and the faculty must constitute a viable academic community.

## 6. EQUIS Standards and Criteria

The School has a reasonable prospect of satisfying the EQUIS criteria within two years of being declared eligible. The perceived ability to meet the EQUIS Standards & Criteria is the key factor for the Committee in making the decision for eligibility.

In this process, the onus is upon the School to present a convincing case that it does demonstrably satisfy the above Eligibility Criteria.

### *The Eligibility Decision*

The EQUIS Committee normally meets 3 times a year, approximately every 4 months, to make Eligibility decisions. A School can expect to be presented to the Committee for Eligibility at the next available date if its Datasheet and, in case it worked with an Advisor, the Advisor's Eligibility Evaluation are received and approved by the EQUIS Office not less than 1 month in advance of this date.

The EQUIS Office will present the School to the EQUIS Committee for decision on Eligibility. The Committee will take the Advisor's Eligibility Evaluation into account, if one exists, or alternatively the Briefing Visit Report but will not be bound by it in making its final decision. In the case of a positive eligibility decision, the Committee will also select a specific programme (referred to subsequently as the Selected Programme) to be assessed in greater depth during the Peer Review Visit. Finally, the Committee may determine whether Executive Education should be excluded from the accreditation. If excluded by the EQUIS Committee, the School should indicate this in its Self-Assessment Report under Chapter 6. If Executive Education is of negligible size, the Peer Review Team, during the Peer Review Visit, may decide on the basis of the description whether to assess or exclude it from the assessment.

The decision to declare a School "Eligible" will be accompanied by preliminary assessment of its situation with respect to the EQUIS standards. This assessment will reflect the views of the members of the EQUIS Committee, informed by the report of the EQUIS expert, with respect to areas of concern or possible difficulties that may be encountered along the road to the future accreditation (subsequently referred to as Reservations).

A favourable Eligibility decision is not to be interpreted as a formal prediction of future success at the end of the accreditation process.

The decision to declare a School "Not Eligible" will be founded on the EQUIS Committee's judgement that the School has not made a convincing case that it satisfies the Eligibility criteria.

The outcome of the Eligibility decision will be reported to the School within 1 week of the EQUIS Committee meeting.

A School can present an Appeal against the decision on Eligibility. For details, see Annex 20 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes.

## **After the Eligibility Decision**

Being declared Eligible signifies that the School can advance to Stage 6 of the EQUIS process: Self-Assessment.

**Important:** EQUIS requires that the Eligibility criteria be maintained throughout the accreditation process and thereafter during the period of accreditation awarded. If the criteria are no longer met, the School is obliged to inform without delay the EQUIS Office that will then review the case and, if necessary, consult the EQUIS Committee.

A School that is declared Eligible is expected to communicate its plans with respect to the rest of the EQUIS process within two months. This is usually done in the form of a letter or e-mail from the Dean to the EQUIS Office indicating the time period in which the School is aiming to host the Peer Review Visit. Eligibility is valid for a maximum period of two years, within which the Peer Review Visit has to take place, and expires once a School is presented to the EQUIS Accreditation Board for the Accreditation decision.

If the EQUIS Committee has communicated reservations, then the School should make tangible progress in the respective areas before receiving the Peer Review Team.

If a School has been declared Not Eligible, then it can choose to immediately restart Stage 3, however, it cannot reapply for Eligibility within 2 years after the Committee decision.

Schools, re-entering the EQUIS process at stage 3 between 2 and 5 years failing to achieve eligibility or after eligibility has expired, should provide a Progress Report, in addition to the Datasheet. This should show how the School has overcome the weaknesses outlined in the EQUIS Committee letter and indicate the progress made in those areas. If more than 5 years have elapsed, a re-application will be treated as an initial application.

## **Stage 6: Self-Assessment (in case of initial applicants, with Advisory)**

As soon as a School is declared Eligible, it should initiate an extensive self-evaluation leading to a Self-Assessment Report. The Report should cover the ten chapters of the **EQUIS Standards and Criteria** document in accordance with the Guidance for Self-Assessment in Section 5 of this Process Manual.

Schools seeking initial accreditation are assigned an Advisor, normally the person who has assisted the School in the pre-eligibility stage. The Advisor helps the School to address its reservations (as included in the Eligibility letter) and also provides more general developmental support. The Advisor further supports and advises the School in creating a coherent, self-critical and convincing narrative that sets out how the School meets the EQUIS Standards and Criteria. This may involve commenting on the draft Self-Assessment Report, as well as providing advice on the process of preparing the Self-Assessment and Peer Review.

In drafting the Self-Assessment Report, the School should refer constantly to the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria*** document, which explains in detail what should be covered for each of the ten areas in the EQUIS framework. The document also lists the supporting information and materials that should be included in the Self-Assessment Report or made available to the Peer Review Team in the Base Room (see also Annexes 8 and 9).

The Report must be reflective rather than promotional, with critical analysis and assessment of evidence. The objective of the Self-Assessment process and report is to assist the EQUIS accreditation process, not simply to accumulate a mass of data.

The self-evaluation process is designed to help the School gain a clearer understanding of its strategic position by assessing its strengths and weaknesses, by measuring the principal constraints and opportunities determined by its environment, and by looking realistically at the coherence between its ambitions and its resources. The process is also designed to lead the School to judge the overall effectiveness of its own processes. It should contribute substantially to the development of the School and in itself provide considerable added value.

With these objectives in mind, there will constantly be a balance between facts and their interpretation. On the one hand, all factual and descriptive information should be interpreted and eventually assessed. On the other hand, all claims, judgements and statements should be backed up by the facts necessary to corroborate them. This process is expected to take a minimum of six to twelve months. In addition, the School may request guidance from the EQUIS Office in preparing its Self-Assessment Report.

The Self-Assessment Report must be between 100 and 150 pages in length. The report, together with annexes, the Student Report (in a separate file) and the updated Datasheet (in a separate file), should be sent to the EQUIS office in electronic copy only and to each of the four Peer Reviewers both in hard copy and in electronic copy. The electronic documents should be in PDF format.

The Self-Assessment Report should be submitted first to the EQUIS Office not less than eight weeks before the date set for the Peer Review; and upon approval on completeness, to the Peer Reviewers not less than six weeks before the start of the Peer Review.

The EQUIS Office will independently receive the Advisor's Assessment Evaluation (at least two months in advance of the Peer Review Visit), which will be shared with the Peer Review Team and the School. The Advisor's report should evaluate the developmental progress during the eligibility period as well as the principal strengths and weaknesses of the School from an EQUIS perspective (see Annex 6 in the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes for the Advisor's Assessment Evaluation Form).

It is important to note that, should a Self-Assessment Report be considered inadequate as a preparation for the Peer Review or if it is delivered too late, the

visit may be postponed. In this situation, any additional costs incurred, for example the rescheduling of Peer Reviewer flights, will be at the expense of the School.

Unless otherwise explicitly notified, by entering the process, the School authorises EFMD to use the submitted documents for research purposes and aggregate reporting. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured in such cases.

### **Stage 7: Peer Review Visit**

A team of Peer Reviewers will visit the School to make an assessment of its standing as regards the EQUIS standards and to draw up recommendations for future progress.

As soon as the School is clear about the time it will need to prepare the Self-Assessment Report, it should ask the EQUIS Office to schedule the Peer Review Visit. The date of the Visit should be determined at least 9 months in advance (ideally maximum two months after the EQUIS Committee decision or for re-accreditations at the time of re-applying). The School is expected to consult the Advisor with respect to the time required to produce the Self-Assessment Report. In estimating the date for the Visit, the School must take into account that the Self-Assessment Report should reach the EQUIS office at least eight weeks before the date on which the Peer Review Visit will start. Upon approval for completeness by the EQUIS office, the School can then submit the SAR to the Reviewers as well (not less than six weeks before the start of the Peer Review Visit). The School must also make sure that all its internal approval procedures and requirements are met before proposing a date. The Visit should take place at a time when courses from the major programmes are taking place within the School. Rescheduling is only permitted for unforeseeable and major causes and it will most likely produce a considerable delay in the accreditation process. The School will have to cover all expenses incurred by the reviewers (e.g. flight tickets...) up to the time of cancellation/postponement of the Visit. In addition, the School will be charged an EFMD Administration Fee (see Fee Schedule, Annex 3).

Two months prior to the Peer Review Visit, the School will send the EQUIS Office a proposal for the schedule of the Visit prepared in accordance with the model provided in Annex 7 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes – EQUIS Peer Review Visit Schedule – Templates and the Guidance for Peer Review in Section 6 of this Process Manual. This schedule will be reviewed by the EQUIS Office, in collaboration with the Chair and changes to it may be proposed to the School. Schools should not send the draft schedule directly to the Chair or the members of the Peer Review Team. The EQUIS Office will send the schedule to the Peer Review Team once it has been finalised.

In addition, the EQUIS Office will send to the Peer Reviewers a (hard) copy of relevant EQUIS documents for the Visit as well as the Advisor's Assessment Evaluation.

The Visit lasts two and a half days during which the EQUIS Peer Reviewers meet a wide variety of people representing the different activities and interests of the School. In cases where a School has activities or grants degrees in different locations, either alone or in collaboration with partner institutions, please refer to Annexes 15 and 16 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes for further details. A visit to another School campus may be added upon the request of the EQUIS Committee or the discretion of the EQUIS Office.

At the end of the Peer Review Visit, the Chair presents to the Executive Team of the School the Peer Review Team's preliminary conclusions and recommendations for quality improvement during an oral feedback session. It is not appropriate at this point to divulge the recommendation that the Peer Review Team intends to make to the Accreditation Board. Nor is it appropriate to engage in a discussion of the oral assessment. The Chair then drafts the Peer Review Report and sends it to the other reviewers for suggestions and amendments. This normally takes between two and six weeks.

The Peer Review Report sets out the Team's final assessment of the School against the EQUIS quality criteria together with its recommendation to the EQUIS Accreditation Board regarding accreditation. It should reflect the consensus opinion of the Peer Review Team. The recommendation will be for 5-year accreditation, 3-year accreditation, or denial of accreditation.

The draft report with the recommendation will be sent to the School for comment and confirmation of factual accuracy not later than 8 weeks after the Peer Review Visit. All factual errors will be corrected by the Chair of the Peer Review Team in liaison with the EQUIS office. The Chair may, at his or her discretion, take into account some of the School's comments concerning the judgments expressed in the report. Issues that substantially change the assessment of the PRT should be agreed with the whole team. The final version of the report, together with the recommendation, will be returned to the School. Before the report is submitted to the Accreditation Board, the School must give its formal authorisation to the EQUIS Office.

The final Peer Review Report is normally presented to the next EQUIS Accreditation Board meeting that takes place at least 10 weeks after the Peer Review Visit.

When the recommendation of the Peer Review Team as regards the application to EQUIS is for non-accreditation, the School has the option to withdraw its application for accreditation, in which case no formal decision will be taken by the Accreditation Board. This option implies that the School discards an appeal against the Accreditation Board decision, since no such decision will be made at the School's explicit request.

The Peer Review process is described in detail in Section 6 of this Process Manual, entitled "Guidance for Peer Review".

## **Stage 8: Accreditation**

With the formal agreement of the School, the Peer Review Report is submitted to the Accreditation Board for the final decision on accreditation. The outcome will be 5-year Accreditation, 3-year Accreditation or Non-Accreditation. The formal decision will be communicated orally (or through a brief e-mail) to the School within 48 hours of the meeting of the Accreditation Board. This communication will be followed up with a formal letter within 1 week.

A School can present an Appeal against the decision on accreditation. For details, see Annex 20 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes.

### ***5-year Accreditation***

Schools that, in the Accreditation Board's judgement, meet all the EQUIS quality standards will be awarded EQUIS accreditation for a period of five years. This means that these schools are good in all areas and probably excellent in some of them. However, there is always scope for improvement and evidence of continuing progress will be expected at the next review.

### ***3-year Accreditation***

Schools satisfying all the EQUIS Standards except in one or two of the quality dimensions that are only partially satisfied are awarded EQUIS accreditation for a period of three years.

There are two possible situations: a) To maintain accreditation, these schools must demonstrate tri-annual progress both overall and in the Areas of Required Improvement set out by the Accreditation Board. b) Schools that satisfy all the Standards except for one that cannot be expected to be fully satisfied due to environmental circumstances. In these cases, the School has to demonstrate awareness of this and show significant commitment to strengthen this dimension in the 3-year period. Until the circumstances change, continuing 3-year accreditation is possible.

Both the degree to which quality is below the EQUIS standard and the number of EQUIS criteria affected determine whether the School will achieve 3-year Accreditation.

The letter communicating the Accreditation Board decision to the School will normally indicate three Areas of Required Improvement that must be satisfied during the three-year period if EQUIS accreditation is to be maintained.

### ***Non-Accreditation***

Schools that, in the Accreditation Board's judgement, are below the EQUIS standards of quality in a given set of EQUIS criteria will be denied accreditation. Both the degree to which quality is below the EQUIS standard and the number of EQUIS criteria affected will be grounds for the Accreditation Board to reject a School's accreditation.

Sometimes the Accreditation Board may not follow the recommendation of the Peer Review Team. This happens for various reasons including the following:

- There is inconsistency within the report between the conclusions set out in the main body of the text and the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet (see Annex 11) or the recommendation regarding accreditation.
- The interpretation of the EQUIS standards by the Peer Review Team does not fully match that of the Accreditation Board.

A School that has been denied accreditation (or has withdrawn before presentation to the EQUIS Accreditation Board) loses its eligibility status. The School can choose to restart Stage 3 immediately. However, it cannot reapply for Eligibility within 2 years after the Accreditation Board decision (or date of withdrawal).

Schools re-entering the EQUIS process at stage 3 between 2 and 5 years after failing to achieve accreditation or after withdrawal following a negative Peer Review recommendation, are asked to provide a Progress Report, in addition to the datasheet. The report should convincingly demonstrate that the School has overcome the weaknesses outlined in the Accreditation Board letter and should further explain the progress it has made in implementing the recommendations in the Peer Review Report. Schools having withdrawn from the process should indicate progress in the areas that led to a negative recommendation by the Peer Review Team.

### ***Specific policies applying after accreditation***

A School that is awarded EQUIS accreditation must abide by the EQUIS Communication Policy (see Annex 19).

It is important to note that accredited schools must inform the EQUIS Office of any major changes that take place within the School during the accreditation period, for example major restructuring or merger activities (see Annex 21 in the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes for the detailed EQUIS Policy on Institutional Change and Restructuring). The School must also report any changes that might lead to a loss of eligibility (e.g. the core faculty number falling below the required minimum). The EQUIS Office will consult the EQUIS Accreditation Board for advice on whether it would be appropriate to change the date of the School's re-accreditation.

*Note that the names of all Schools accredited by EQUIS will be published on the EFMD website and in other documentation along with the period of accreditation (due to the EU Directive on Freedom of Information). EFMD will not be held liable for any damage caused by such publication.*

## **Stage 9: Continuous Improvement following Accreditation**

The process of institutional development and quality improvement does not come to an end with the achievement of accreditation. All schools within the EQUIS system will be required to actively pursue a development plan, agreed with the EQUIS Office in the case of 5-year accreditation or determined by the Accreditation Board in the case of 3-year accreditation. The resulting Progress Reports as well as the Feedback provided by the EQUIS Office are considered important documents in the re-accreditation process of the School.

Quality improvement is an essential element of the EQUIS process. The Accreditation Board may deny re-accreditation if the School has provided insufficient evidence of addressing the Areas of Required Improvement and inadequate tangible progress has been achieved.

### ***For Schools Accredited for a 5-year period***

In the month following the award of 5-year EQUIS Accreditation, the School should select at least three Development Objectives to be pursued during this period. The purpose is to ensure that even schools granted full 5-year Accreditation continue to develop in the EQUIS spirit of institutional development and continuous improvement.

The selection of these objectives should normally be based on the recommendations provided by the Peer Review Team in its Report. The School may, however, select other objectives which are not based on these recommendations as long as a convincing rationale is presented. The selected objectives will be sent to the EQUIS Office for agreement, based on their appropriateness and on the degree of challenge they present to the School.

Any School receiving 5-year Accreditation will be expected to submit a 10-15-page Mid-Term Progress Report to the EQUIS Office 30 months after accreditation by the Accreditation Board (see Annex 13 in the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes for the EQUIS Progress Report Form). The report will describe clearly and succinctly the progress made on the achievement of the objectives selected by the School and approved by EQUIS.

The EQUIS Office will evaluate the Mid-Term Progress Report and the feedback will be communicated to the School.

### ***For Schools Accredited for a 3-year period***

Any School receiving 3-year Accreditation will be required to submit an 8-10-page annual Progress Report to EQUIS at the end of Year 1 and of Year 2 after being awarded the accreditation (i.e. 12 and 24 months from the date of the EQUIS Accreditation Board decision). The report should describe clearly and succinctly the progress made on the Areas of Required Improvement established by the EQUIS Accreditation Board (see Annex 14 in the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes for the EQUIS Progress Report Form). The report should be submitted to the EQUIS Office.

The EQUIS Office will evaluate the Progress Report and the feedback will be communicated to the School. A follow-up visit after Year 1 and Year 2 may very exceptionally take place if deemed necessary after study of the Progress Report.

When a School fails to provide the annual Progress Report on time or when the evaluators consider that insufficient achievement is shown, EQUIS may make a case for the Accreditation Board to withdraw the accreditation in the next scheduled Accreditation Board meeting. It should be noted that feedback on progress reports is only for guidance and a complete assessment can only occur at the next accreditation visit.

In both cases (i.e. 5-year and 3-year Accreditation) the Progress Reports and feedback are included in the material given to the Peer Review Team when the School next undergoes the re-accreditation process and form part of the documentation upon which the assessment is based.

### **Stage 10: Re-Accreditation**

EQUIS accreditation is granted for a limited period, either 5 years or 3 years. Therefore, a School that wishes to maintain its accreditation must enter a process of re-accreditation before expiry of the three- or five-year period. Since preparing for re-accreditation may take several months, a School is invited to apply for re-accreditation approximately 15 months before its accreditation expires. The expiry date is 3 or 5 years later from the date on which the EQUIS accreditation was granted by the Accreditation Board.

The EQUIS Office will remind the School about the expiry of its accreditation.

Schools that have been EQUIS accredited for at least three consecutive periods of 5 years can opt for Special Re-accreditation (see Annex 22 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes).

The procedures described below apply to Schools renewing their accreditation in the regular re-accreditation scheme.

The School sends an application letter, which explicitly indicates any proposed changes in institutional scope, as well as an EQUIS Application Form (see Annex 1 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes) and a full EQUIS Datasheet

(see Annex 2 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes) to the EQUIS Office. These documents need to be received at the latest one year in advance of the expiry date of the accreditation.

In its Datasheet, the School nominates three different programmes from its portfolio such that there is a variety of programmes types. (The previously selected programme should normally not be suggested.) The EQUIS Office will select a specific programme to be assessed in greater depth (referred subsequently to as the Selected Programme) during the Peer Review Visit among the three programmes suggested by the School. This Programme should also be described in more detail in the Self-Assessment Report. EQUIS refers to chapters two to five of the EPAS Standards and Criteria giving guidance on the information that EQUIS expects to see on this Selected Programme in Chapter 2 of the Self-Assessment Report.

The process is substantially the same as for initial accreditation following the eligibility decision. The School is expected to conduct a complete self-evaluation and to produce a comprehensive Self-Assessment Report covering the ten chapters of the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria*** document. The Self-Assessment Report should be accompanied by the Student Report and an updated full Datasheet (both in separate files). This will be followed by a full two and a half-day Peer Review Visit by a team of four reviewers. The Accreditation Board will make the final decision on the renewal of accreditation based on the report and recommendation of the Peer Review Team. As for initial accreditation, the decision may be for five years, three years or non-accreditation.

There will, of course, be significant differences of focus in the re-accreditation visit. It will remain important to establish how well the School continues to satisfy the full range of EQUIS criteria, but particular emphasis will be placed on changes that have occurred and progress that has been achieved during the accreditation period.

### ***The Self-Assessment Report***

The Self-Assessment Report itself should be drafted in accordance with the guidelines established in Section 5 “Guidance for Self-Assessment”. Following the usual practice, the report is expected to be organised in such a way that each of the 10 EQUIS areas is covered in a separate chapter. Each chapter should begin with a section summarising the changes that have occurred since the previous accreditation and explaining the principal challenges that the School is now facing.

The Self-Assessment Report should be written with careful reference to the observations and recommendations contained in the previous Peer Review Report. In the case of Schools granted accreditation for five years, it should also describe the progress towards achieving the three strategic development objectives chosen by the School. In the case of an assessment after a three-year accreditation, the School will be expected to produce convincing evidence that it has made real progress in the areas specified by the Accreditation Board. Reference should be made to the progress reports that the School has

submitted in the years since the previous Peer Review as well as the feedback provided by the EQUIS Office.

If a School has Executive Education activities (even of negligible size) it should always describe them in the Self-Assessment Report as indicated in Chapter 6 on Executive Education of the EQUIS Standards and Criteria Document. The School can make a case for Executive Education to be excluded at the beginning of this chapter because it is of negligible size. The Peer Review Team will decide on the basis of this description whether to assess or exclude it from the assessment.

It is important to bear in mind when compiling the Self-Assessment Report that the members of the Peer Review Team will be different from those participating in the initial visit and they will not have access to the previous Self-Assessment Report.

### ***The Peer Review Visit***

The organisation of the Peer Review Visit will be similar to that of an initial accreditation in terms of logistical and procedural aspects. Therefore, the Peer Review Team will be composed of 3 academics and one representative from the world of practice and the visit itself will last two and a half working days. One of the 3 academic members may be familiar with the local educational environment. The School will be given the option (after being contacted by the EQUIS Office) to take up this possibility. Schools going through a re-accreditation review are not obliged to have one of the Peer Reviewers from the local environment.

The schedule of the Visit will follow closely that of an initial accreditation. However, since the focus of the Peer Review Visit will be adapted to the objectives of re-accreditation as described above, it requires a different balance in the organisation of the interviews.

For example, for a visit after a five-year accreditation, the Peer Review Team will usually spend more time with the School's top management team than in an initial accreditation. A single meeting with a selection of administrative staff may replace the sessions devoted to support services. In all cases, the Visit will be organised in such a way that priority is given to quality improvement and strategic development issues.

In a Visit following a three-year accreditation, the meetings will reflect the need to thoroughly check progress in the Areas of Required Improvement specified by the Accreditation Board.

### ***Policy on non-renewal of accreditation***

This policy is specifically designed to mitigate the effects of negative re-accreditation decisions by:

- a) giving more time for the School to manage the situation rather than being instantly removed from the list of accredited schools.
- b) granting schools an opportunity to state their case again, if they believe this will be to their benefit.

The following process will apply to the re-accreditations of schools previously accredited:

1. When a School learns through the Peer Review Report (PRR) of a recommendation by the Peer Review Team (PRT) for non-accreditation and the School then decides to withdraw from the accreditation process, its name will be removed from the list of accredited schools only 6 months after the date of the Accreditation Board (AB) meeting to which the Report would have otherwise been submitted. The School can choose to restart Stage 3 immediately. However, it cannot reapply for Eligibility within 2 years after the date of withdrawal.
2. If the AB makes a negative decision (either based on a negative recommendation or by not supporting a positive recommendation in the PRR), the School will be automatically placed on *Deferral* and it will not be removed immediately from the list of accredited schools.
3. The Deferral School will be given the option to decide (within a maximum of 2 months of the AB decision date) if it will accept the non-accreditation or if it will aim for another full Peer Review Visit to take place within 1 year of the AB decision date. This Peer Review Visit will require the preparation of a new Self-Assessment Report by the School and will involve a new PRT. The date of the new PRV should be fixed as soon as the School makes a decision in this respect.
4. The offer of a new Peer Review Visit should not be interpreted as recognition that the previous Peer Review Team, the Accreditation Board or anyone else involved from EFMD did not perform as required. Should the School think otherwise, it should appeal the decision rather than opting for the new Peer Review Visit. This new visit is just an additional opportunity granted to the School that faces losing its EFMD accreditation. The School then has to make sure that its new Self-Assessment Report and the information provided to the new Peer Review Team persuasively convey the quality of the School according to the established quality framework. The School should therefore pay particular attention to the recommendations made in the latest PRR and in the AB letter of non-accreditation. Both of these will be part of the documentation provided to the new Peer Review Team.
5. No Application Fee (see Fee Schedule) will be charged for the new review but the Review Fee applicable in the year of the AB decision will be charged. The Accreditation Fee for the deferral year (i.e. for extension of accreditation) will also be charged. If a School then cancels the PRV during the Deferral period, a cancellation fee will be charged and the School will be removed from the accredited list (allowing the 6-months grace from the date of the AB decision as indicated below).

6. If the School opts for a new review, it will remain on the list of accredited schools until the Accreditation Board makes a decision on the second Peer Review Report. A negative decision at that time will be final, i.e. it will not be allowed a further deferral period or appeal, and the School will be removed from the list of accredited schools.
7. If the School rejects the option of a new review and accepts the non-accreditation decision, it will remain on the list of accredited schools for a total of 6 months after the Accreditation Board decision date. The School can choose to restart Stage 3 immediately. However, it cannot reapply for Eligibility within 2 years after the Accreditation Board decision.

## **Section 4: BRIEFING VISIT GUIDELINES**

*This section is aimed primarily at those undertaking a Briefing Visit but will also be of interest to schools seeking accreditation.*

The on-site Briefing Visit is an important part of the EQUIS application process, scheduled shortly after receipt of the School's application for entry into the EQUIS accreditation process. In many cases, this will be the first structured contact between the School and EQUIS. It is important, therefore, in establishing confidence and in initiating a constructive relationship between the School and EQUIS.

### **1. The Objectives of the Briefing Visit**

- To provide information and to answer questions about EQUIS.
- To make sure that the management of the School understands the EQUIS criteria and procedures.
- To undertake a preliminary assessment as to whether the School satisfies the Eligibility criteria (see Section 3, stage 5 - Eligibility Criteria - of this Manual).
- To conduct a pre-evaluation of the School in order to identify possible concerns or major obstacles to future eligibility or accreditation. To achieve this, it may be necessary to collect information about the School beyond that provided by the Datasheet.
- To advise the School on its apparent standing as compared to the level of quality expected for EQUIS accreditation, particularly in relation to difficulties that may be encountered in certain areas.
- To perform a preliminary assessment of whether Executive Education should be excluded from the accreditation.
- To discuss the programme portfolio so that the visiting expert may make an informed recommendation on the selected programme.
- To help the School's management to launch the EQUIS process internally by briefing members of the School and answering questions in an open forum.
- To guide the School's management in setting up working parties to prepare the EQUIS Self-Assessment Report and to brief the EQUIS project leader within the School on how to manage the process effectively.
- To provide the basis for a short (max 3 pages) Briefing Visit Report describing the School's advisory needs if any.

## **2. Presentation and explanation of the EQUIS system**

The visiting EQUIS expert designated by the EQUIS Office should make sure that the School has understood the overall EQUIS process and the respective roles within the process of the EQUIS team, the EQUIS Committee, the Accreditation Board and the Peer Review Team. It is particularly important to explain the founding principles of EQUIS and the criteria framework within which the assessment is made. The EQUIS expert should explain in some detail the expectations regarding the Self-Assessment Report, and the organisation of the Peer Review Visit.

The briefing should be seen not just as a technical presentation of the system, but as an opportunity to motivate members of the School as they enter the EQUIS process. An important objective is often to support the Dean and the School's management team in its effort to launch the process internally. From this perspective, the visiting expert should be able to answer the probable questions that will arise.

The EQUIS expert should underline that the process is designed to support institutional development. Schools entering the process should, therefore, establish clear links between their own internal strategic development processes and the work done in the self-assessment stage.

The EQUIS office will provide a set of PowerPoint slides for the presentation of the accreditation process. This material will also be sent to the School before the EQUIS expert's visit, together with electronic copies of all the relevant documents.

## **3. Specifying the School's Advisory Needs**

A further objective of the visit is for the EQUIS expert to assess the School's potential advisory needs. The report should, therefore, indicate obvious shortcomings, potential problems and major risks that may make accreditation unlikely or uncertain.

Sufficient time must be allowed within the Briefing Visit for the EQUIS expert to cover all relevant issues and to ask for additional information beyond what is stated in the Datasheet. It may often be necessary to suggest changes and additions that will improve the Datasheet.

In the discussions that this part of the visit schedule will generate, the EQUIS expert may often find that they are called upon to take on an advisory role. While there are obvious limits to this at such an early stage, it should be seen as the beginning of the development relationship that is at the heart of the EQUIS process.

The Briefing Visit report is normally quite short, three pages at most. The template form (in Annex 4 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes) provides a framework for drafting the report.

## 4. Organisation of the Visit

The visit is organised to last for at least half a day. The EQUIS Office will contact the School to organise the briefing visit.

**A typical Briefing Visit schedule would be as follows:**

### 1. *Introductory session open to all members of the School (1½ hours)*

The visiting expert sets out the objectives of the visit and begins with a brief introduction to EFMD and Quality Services (15 minutes).

This is followed by a general presentation of the EQUIS process (60 minutes).

The final quarter of the session is devoted to questions from the audience (15 minutes).

### 2. *Review of the Datasheet and Pre-Evaluation (1½ hours)*

This session will be held with the School's management team (it will typically involve the School's Dean or Director, the EQUIS Project Leader within the School, and the School's Executive Committee) and a small number of other participants directly involved in the process. It is recommended that this group attends the introductory session too.

### 3. *Process Briefing and Advice (1 hour)*

The visiting expert makes sure that the School has understood the EQUIS process and answers all questions that arise, summarises strengths and weaknesses in their eligibility, and advises on how to structure the accreditation project.

*The sessions 'Review of the Datasheet and Pre-Evaluation' and 'Process Briefing and Advice' should not include too many participants to allow for meaningful discussions (a maximum number of 10 participants per session).*

## **Section 5:                    GUIDANCE FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT**

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*This section is aimed primarily at Schools seeking accreditation but will also be of interest to EQUIS Peer Reviewers.*

### **1.     The Purpose of Self-Assessment**

Self-Assessment is a key part of the EQUIS accreditation process, but it should also have much wider significance for the School and for the team within the School that is responsible for EQUIS. It provides an opportunity for the School to gain greater ownership of the process and to improve its own understanding of the issues surrounding its development as a high-quality provider of management education. Within an international context, the School should be seeking answers to some fundamental questions such as *'Is the School adding value for participants in line with its stated mission and strategy? Is it serving its different constituencies well?'*

The Self-Assessment process should form an integral part of the School's quality system to avoid redundancy of effort and to ensure maximum contribution towards continuous improvement. An effective Self-Assessment will link the School's existing processes in the areas of strategic management, quality management, and programme management with the processes leading to EQUIS accreditation. A superficial assessment carried out in isolation from normal processes will simply divert resources and hinder the ability of the Peer Review Team to evaluate the School.

The main aims of the EQUIS Self-Assessment process are to:

#### ***1.1 Provide an opportunity for the entire institution to take stock of its situation***

This assessment should not be approached as a restricted exercise carried out by a few key staff in the School. It should be owned by the whole organisation and implemented as a major review, even if some aspects of the assessment are challenging and may provoke resistance. It should:

- involve as many people as possible and certainly all the major actors
- provide added value to the School through the processes used
- present a historical perspective, i.e. how the School has developed and how it sees its future
- be a learning process for the School and provide a chance for everyone to gain an overall view of its situation
- not be reduced to the mere production of a Self-Assessment Report by an isolated team.

## **1.2 Carry out a comprehensive strategic review**

The Self-Assessment should provide a review of the strategy process within the School. It should:

- evaluate the overall appropriateness, consistency and credibility of the strategic objectives
- lead to a better understanding of the market and of the environmental constraints
- help the School achieve a balance between ambition and realism
- lead to the development of a strategic plan which will enable achievement of the strategic objectives within the envelope of currently available and of potential future resources.

## **1.3 Result in an unbiased and critical self-examination**

The key objective of the Self-Assessment is to evaluate the School's effectiveness in attaining its strategic objectives and in striving towards continuous improvement in programme, research and process quality. The Self-Assessment process should identify its current position against the EQUIS criteria and establish the basis for future action. The School will need to:

- ask searching questions
- measure its activities against external norms
- identify key strengths and weaknesses
- evaluate the adequacy of resources and identify key limitations
- arrive at a clear understanding of the efforts to be deployed in order to achieve its strategic objectives.

## **1.4 Provide a basis for the Peer Review**

The Self-Assessment Report summarises the outcome of the Self-Assessment process and as such forms the basis for the Peer Review. The needs of the Peer Review Team must be considered carefully during the Self-Assessment process and particularly during the writing of the final report. The School has a responsibility to present information that will:

- establish a starting point and a balanced evaluation to be tested by the reviewers
- provide key data and supporting documentation to aid understanding and to substantiate claims made in the report.

## **2. The Self-Assessment Process**

The overall Self-Assessment process will probably take between six months and one year. Actual time will depend on the size and complexity of the School and its experience with accreditation. The School will send copies of the completed Self-Assessment Report initially to the EQUIS Office at least 8 weeks before the start of the Peer Review Visit. Upon confirmation by the

EQUIS Office, the School will send it to the members of the Peer Review Team at least 6 weeks before the start of the Peer Review Visit.

The following actions are recommended in designing and implementing the Self-Assessment process:

### **2.1 Responsibilities**

EFMD recommends that as soon as possible the School should appoint an Accreditation Project Leader and an Accreditation Committee to manage the process and draft the report.

It is obvious that the Project Leader should be suitably qualified and resourced to carry out the work. Representation on the Accreditation Committee is also a key issue, and should include representatives from key stakeholder groups including representatives from the student body who will co-ordinate the student contribution to the Self-Assessment Process.

### **2.2 Communication**

At an early stage, the School's top management team will need to provide a full explanation within the School of the aims of the Self-Assessment exercise, of its role in the wider accreditation process and of the standards against which the School is measuring itself in the first instance. The assessment process should involve all key stakeholders, who will need to understand the process if they are to contribute fully to the implementation of a rigorous Self-Assessment. Effective communication with these parties should be maintained throughout the process.

The Self-Assessment is an ideal opportunity for the School to obtain commitment from key stakeholders to secure resources and improve quality. Considerable care must therefore be taken to present the results of the Self-Assessment in a balanced, realistic and honest way. The conclusions should state clearly what will need to be done to continue progress towards the achievement of the School's strategic goals. It must also provide the basis for an evaluation by the Peer Review Team.

### **2.3 Methodology & Planning**

The starting point of a successful Self-Assessment process is the early development of a detailed plan. This will provide sufficient time to carry out a quality Self-Assessment and deliver a Self-Assessment Report by the required date.

The detailed project plan should contain details of the main stages of the assessment, methods to be employed, key issues to be addressed, responsibilities and participants, as well as time frames. The key stages of the assessment process will need to be accompanied by the systematic collection of data to support the process and address the criteria for EQUIS accreditation.

There is no pre-established format for the approach to be adopted when conducting the Self-Assessment. Each School should develop a plan that meets its own specific needs.

However, the following criteria should be applied to the design of the Self-Assessment process:

- **Systematic process**- the Self-Assessment should be well-planned, thorough and comprehensive. The assessment should be driven by a methodology seeking to answer key questions, rather than simple application of a tick-box approach.
- **Objectivity and balance**- the Self-Assessment should produce an objective statement of current strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats and a determination of the action needed to address these issues. The assessment team should not restrict itself to the EQUIS criteria for guidance and it should use as many sources of information as possible.
- **Participation**- in collecting data and evaluating the results of the review, the School should involve a variety of groups to agree key conclusions and recommendations. This is not just a way of improving objectivity, but also a way of incorporating different perspectives, improving communication and commitment to the findings.

## 2.4 Reporting

Alongside the formulation of the detailed project plan, the School should also determine the eventual format of the Self-Assessment Report, taking into account the requirements of EQUIS in terms of the content to be covered.

More detailed information on the format, content and preparation of the Self-Assessment Report is given in Part 3 of this section.

## 2.5 Data Collection

Having decided the methodology for the Self-Assessment and the general format of the report, the School will need to determine the information and documents to be collected.

The collection and analysis of information for the Self-Assessment require considerable time and effort. It is useful to identify the key sources of information at an early stage and allocate clear responsibilities for the collection, organisation, dissemination and analysis of information. The School should seek to use as wide a variety of sources as possible to include internal and external reports (e.g. assessment/ accreditation/ audit reports, programme reviews, assessment results, exit surveys), special surveys, interviews and focus groups.

## 2.6 Other Considerations

The School must ensure that the national context within which it operates is clearly explained in the Self-Assessment Report so that the assessment by the Peer Review Team can take into account the constraints and specific quality expectations of the local environment.

The EQUIS Office will always be available to provide advice.

## 3. The Self-Assessment Report

The Self-Assessment Report should be based on the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria*** document which sets out the full range of the EQUIS quality standards and the criteria against which the quality of the School will be measured. The standards and the associated criteria are grouped into ten chapters covering the different areas that will be reviewed:

1. Context, Governance and Strategy
2. Programmes
3. Students
4. Faculty
5. Research and Development
6. Executive Education
7. Resources and Administration
8. Internationalisation
9. Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability
10. Connections with Practice

The purpose of the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria*** document is twofold: on the one hand, to provide a comprehensive description of the standards and criteria against which the School is to be reviewed and on the other hand to give guidance to Schools in preparing their Self-Assessment Report as indicated in section 3.1.4 below.

A copy of the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria*** document can be obtained from the EFMD website or from the EQUIS Office.

The following comments are relevant in the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report:

### 3.1 Main Report

The Self-Assessment Report should lead to a conclusion in which the School makes a case for EQUIS accreditation. The Report should be self-evaluative and self-critical and should demonstrate how the School has addressed existing weaknesses and how it will do so in the future. Delivering a promotional document should be avoided at all cost, as this will force the Peer Review Team to focus on fact finding rather than on providing qualified advice.

The overall report should be a unified piece of work, rather than a collection of separate individual reports.

The report must be between 100 and 150 pages long, excluding annexes and supporting documents (with a font size not smaller than Arial 10).

### 3.1.1 Cover page

The cover of the Self-Assessment Report should clearly state the full name of the School, the date of submission to the EQUIS office and the name of the individual to contact in case of questions related to the report.

### 3.1.2 Statement of Accuracy

The first page of the Self-Assessment Report should contain a statement confirming the accuracy of the report signed by the Head of School and by the most senior representative of the parent Institution (where appropriate). Their titles must be made explicit. The statement should also give brief details of the internal review team and process used to produce the report.

### 3.1.3 Executive Summary

An Executive Summary of 2 to 5 pages should be included at the beginning of the report.

### 3.1.4 Main Content

The Self-Assessment Report should represent an evidence-based narrative covering the ten chapters of the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria*** document. The internal organisation of the ten chapters can be determined freely by each School. There is no requirement to follow the order of the different sections or the order of the items within the sections. Nor is it expected that the School should answer every question. The School is expected to provide its own conclusions from the Self-Assessment process about the dimension being considered in each chapter, in the way it feels most appropriate. However, it is expected that the key issues that are relevant for a comprehensive assessment of the School's activities be carefully addressed.

The items in the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria*** document are formulated in qualitative terms. However, the information provided by the School should, where appropriate, allow an assessment of the quantitative positioning of the School in relation to each criterion. Schools should pay particular attention to the indicators or evidence they use to position themselves in relation to the different EQUIS criteria. Guidance for this is given in each of the chapters in the document.

## **3.2 Annexes and Supporting Documents**

Annexes to the Self-Assessment Report should be limited to materials strictly necessary for a proper understanding of the report and should not exceed the

length of the Self-Assessment Report. Detailed information concerning annexes and supporting materials is provided at the end of each chapter in the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria*** document and is summarised in Annexes 8 and 9 to this Manual.

Bulky documents and less essential material (see Annex 9) should be placed in the Base Room for consultation during the review (hard copy or electronically), or be sent to the Peer Reviewers electronically along with the Self-Assessment Report. For example, it would be useful to include the faculty CVs or resumes and the programme structure material electronically before the visit. These should however also be available in the Base Room.

### ***3.3 Student Report***

The Self-Assessment Report should be accompanied by a report compiled by a representative group of students. A template is provided (see Annex 10), based on selected chapters of the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria*** document, and will be the focus of the discussion with them during the Peer Review Visit.

The student group should compile the Student Report independently. The School should therefore not monitor the discussions leading up to the writing of the report and should also not be involved in the assembly of the report.

### ***3.4 Updated Datasheet***

The submission should also include an updated version of the Datasheet ensuring that the information is accurate at the time of the Peer Review Visit. It is important to use the latest version of the Datasheet template as this is revised every year.

### ***3.5 Distribution of the Self-Assessment Report***

The Self-Assessment Report and accompanying documents (Annexes, Student Report and Datasheet) should initially be sent to the EQUIS Office in electronic copy only at least 8 weeks before the date of the Peer Review Visit. Upon confirmation by the EQUIS Office (completeness and adequacy check), the School will send it to each of the Peer Reviewers in (hard) copy and in electronic (PDF) format at least 6 weeks before the start of the Peer Review Visit.

## **Section 6: GUIDANCE FOR PEER REVIEW**

*This section is aimed primarily at EQUIS Peer Reviewers but will also be of interest to Schools seeking accreditation.*

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Composition of the Peer Review Team (PRT)**

The Peer Review Team is composed of four members holding senior positions in the world of management education or with substantial experience in this field. They will normally have different nationalities or work in different countries. Each Team includes:

- The Chair of the Peer Review Team: an academic (Dean or equivalent) from a different country from the School being assessed
- An academic representative (Dean or equivalent) familiar with the local educational environment, whose role is to explain the contextual background of the School for the benefit of the Peer Review Team. Normally he or she should speak the language of the country. *The above requirement applies to initial Peer Review visits and is optional for re-accreditation visits.*
- Another academic representative (Dean or equivalent)
- A representative from the world of practice.

While the working language of EQUIS is English, every attempt will be made to include a local language speaker within the Peer Review Team.

Particular attention is given to the selection of the “local” reviewer. The School will be consulted on the choice before a person is invited to participate in the review. Once an agreement is reached on potential candidates, the EQUIS Office appoints the local reviewer. *This requirement applies to initial Peer Review visits and is optional for re-accreditation visits.*

The final composition of the PRT will be communicated to the School. At this time, the School will have the opportunity to veto a member of the Team for reasons of conflict of interest, for example if he or she is or was recently working with an institution that is a close competitor. The School should inform the EQUIS Office immediately.

In the unfortunate event of a reviewer being unable to attend at the last minute, the EQUIS Office will endeavour to find an appropriate replacement. However, if this is not possible, the School will be asked to approve a Peer Review Team with only 3 members. There will never be a Peer Review Team with less than 3 members.

The roles and responsibilities of the various Peer Review Team members are set out in detail at the end of this **Guidance for Peer Review**.

In accepting an invitation to participate in a Peer Review, each team member commits to being present throughout the entire visit. Each member will also be

asked to declare any potential conflict of interest, according to the Conflict of Interest Policy (Annex 18).

Each reviewer will have signed a confidentiality agreement with respect to the information provided to them in the context of the reviews, stating also their agreement to conform to the Conflict of Interest Policy (see Annex 17).

It should be noted that the Peer Reviewers volunteer their time and are unpaid for their role in the Peer Review process but will claim reimbursement from the reviewed institution for travel and accommodation costs related to the review. The School should settle reimbursement claims within four weeks after receipt from reviewers.

It is considered inappropriate for individual Peer Reviewers, once assigned to a School's visit, or for the School itself, to suggest or imply mutual areas of collaboration before a final decision on accreditation or re-accreditation has been reached by the Accreditation Board. Prudence suggests that such collaborations should not take place until at least 1,5 years after the accreditation.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Peer Review within the EQUIS process**

The fundamental goal of the Peer Review Visit is to assess the quality of the School's activities against the EQUIS criteria and to make a recommendation for consideration by the Accreditation Board with respect to the accreditation decision. A secondary objective is to fulfil an advisory role leading to suggestions for quality improvement and to offer the School the benefits of a strategic review.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Peer Review will seek to confirm the claims made within the Self-Assessment Report and to secure on-site information sufficient to build up a comprehensive profile of the School.

The balance between the role of the Peer Review process in providing sufficient information to the Accreditation Board to arrive at a decision on accreditation and the wider, strategic and quality improvement role of the Peer Review Visit is delicate. In carrying out EQUIS Peer Reviews, it is important that all parties begin the process with a clear idea of what the Peer Review is designed to achieve. The success of the visit rests on a number of conditions being met by all those involved in the process: e.g.

- Thorough preparation by the School through the production of a Self-Assessment Report.
- Careful reading of the Self-Assessment Report by the Peer Reviewers.
- Clear relationships and expectations on the part of all involved.
- Open discussions free of excessive formalism between the Peer Review Team and the key stakeholders within the School.
- The presentation of confidential feedback and recommendations for accreditation in a professional manner, combining the requirements of the Accreditation Board with an approach that respects the needs of the School as a client.

## 2. Preparation for the Visit

### 2.1 Reading materials for the Peer Reviewers

The following documents will be sent to each member of the Peer Review Team by the EQUIS Office, except 5, 6 and 7, which will be sent by the School directly (see section 5, paragraph 3.5):

#### General Documents:

1. Names and addresses of the members of the Peer Review Team
2. EQUIS Standards and Criteria
3. EQUIS Process Manual and Annexes
4. Guidelines and Position Papers

#### Documents Specific to the School under review:

5. Self-Assessment Report and Annexes
6. The Student Report
7. An updated Datasheet

#### In the case of initial accreditation visits:

8. Eligibility Letter, highlighting any reservations that the EQUIS Committee felt appropriate to the application
9. The Advisor's Assessment Evaluation

#### In the case of re-accreditation visits:

10. The report of the Peer Review Team from the previous Peer Review Visit, as presented to the Accreditation Board
11. The letter setting out the Accreditation Board decision
12. The Progress Report(s) of the School from the previous accreditation period, as well as the feedback of the EQUIS Office

### 2.2 Study of the Self-Assessment Report by the Peer Reviewers

The School will send electronic copies only of the completed Self-Assessment Report (including annexes, Student Report and Datasheet) initially to the EQUIS Office at least 8 weeks before the start of the Peer Review Visit. Upon confirmation by the EQUIS Office (completeness and adequacy check), the School will send it to the members of the Peer Review Team at least 6 weeks before the start of the Peer Review Visit in hard copy and electronic (PDF) format.

It is very important that each member studies this report carefully before the Team comes together for the Briefing Meeting on the evening before the Peer Review Visit. As an important starting point for discussion during this preliminary meeting, each member should attempt to answer the questions listed below:

- *Are all the areas covered by the EQUIS framework adequately addressed in the report?*
- *What further information is required?*
- *Is the report sufficiently self-critical and analytical?*
- *Is the School's local context clearly explained?*
- *Are the School's mission and strategy clear?*
- *Are the strategic aims satisfactorily translated into practice?*
- *Are the mechanisms for the strategic management of the School clearly visible from the report?*
- *Are the problems facing the School clearly formulated?*
- *Does the School clearly sketch out how it plans to deal with these problems?*
- *What preliminary assessment can be formulated against the main EQUIS criteria?*
- *What are the main issues that will require careful analysis during the visit?*

By answering these questions, each team member is not tied to a final judgement but is simply forming a first impression based on the written information supplied. The programme of the Peer Review Visit is put together in such a way that there will be ample opportunity to investigate further these initial findings and consequently to confirm or refute them.

### **2.3 General Logistics**

The School is expected to make all necessary arrangements for accommodation and the local transport for the PRT members. The Project Leader should therefore liaise directly with the EQUIS Office to confirm the travel arrangements for the members of the team.

The members of the Peer Review Team arrange their own travel according to the general guideline that flights should be booked in economy class but business class tickets are allowed in the following circumstances:

1. in a trip involving at least one flight that lasts more than 5 hours, business class can be chosen for this flight and all its connecting flights.
2. A trip involving several flights, all of them lasting less than 5 hours, as long as the time between the scheduled departure of the first flight and the scheduled arrival of the last flight to the final destination takes more than 8 consecutive hours including time spent in connecting airports.

Peer Reviewers are advised to book their flights at the earliest opportunity to minimise the costs to the School. Peer Reviewers should ask approval from the School before ticket purchase, copying the EQUIS Office, and should endeavour to keep the costs as low as possible (a maximum of 6000€ is envisaged but cannot be considered as the norm). Schools under review are expected to cover the travel insurance of Peer Reviewers, where they are not covered by an insurance of their home institution. It is recommended that Reviewers always buy flights with travel insurance. Travel expenses should be claimed from the School, copying additionally the EQUIS Office. If Peer Reviewers combine a Visit to the School with other professional activities, then the Reviewer should agree on a fair cost splitting arrangement with the School.

Hotel accommodation should be of reasonable standard keeping in mind the travel schedule of the PRT members and should be reasonably close to the School. Unless exceptional circumstances exist (for example infrequent flights), schools should expect to cover the costs of 4-nights hotel accommodation for Peer Reviewers travelling for under 5 hours and 5 nights for those travelling for longer than 5 hours. In the latter case, Peer Reviewers are advised to arrive two nights before the start of the Peer Review Visit in order to overcome jetlag effects if necessary. All extra expenses not directly related to the participation of the reviewers in the EQUIS Peer Review Visit will not be covered by the School.

Lunches should be rapid, involving a minimum of disturbance. There is a definite preference for on-site buffet lunches in the Base Room.

The schedule for the visit of two and a half days involving four team members will be very tight, so maximum use of the time is essential. Formal presentations and social events are to be avoided.

**Table nameplates** should be prepared for every participant in each meeting.

Should the School decide to cancel or postpone the Peer Review Visit, the School will be liable for any non-refundable costs incurred by the Peer Reviewers at that time. The School will also be charged a fee to cover the administrative expenses for cancelling or re-scheduling the Visit (see EQUIS Fee Schedule).

In some cases, one or two members of the Peer Review Team will be asked to perform an assessment of another campus of the School (to take place prior to the visit of the main campus) . If necessary, this will be arranged separately by the EQUIS Office.

## **2.4 The Base Room**

The School should make available a Base Room for the duration of the visit. The room provided should:

- be spacious
- include a table for meetings
- possess a large table for laying out documents
- be equipped with a flip chart
- provide a telephone connection and a computer with internet access
- be free from disturbance
- be in close proximity to the room where meetings are held

All documents for the visit, e.g. faculty management handbook, course documents, examples of students' work, case studies, research output, brochures etc. should be available in the Base Room (hard copy or electronically). Guidance on which documents to place in the Base Room can be found at the end of each section in the **EQUIS Standards and Criteria** document (see also Annex 9 to this Manual).

Schools are advised to provide a list of the documents available in the Base Room and to use clearly earmarked folders. This list and the ordering of the folders should follow the structure of the EQUIS Standards & Criteria document and therefore that of the Self-Assessment Report.

Conversations in the Base Room are confidential to the Peer Review Team. For this reason, Schools should not send representatives into the Base Room while the Peer Review Team is meeting there. Confidentiality has to be respected at all times.

The Base Room, if sufficiently spacious, can serve as the main meeting room of the Peer Review Team for conducting interviews. A second meeting room should be made available for the interviews at parallel timings (see the Peer Review Visit Schedule Template for guidance). This second meeting room could also be used as the Base Room if the main meeting room is not sufficiently spacious.

### 3. Setting up the Schedule

#### 3.1 General structure of the visit

The School being visited will be asked to submit to the EQUIS Office a proposed schedule for the visit **at least 2 months before the date of the visit**. The proposed schedule must clearly indicate the timing and subject of each meeting as well as the names and titles of the participants so that the EQUIS Office can evaluate the appropriateness of their inclusion. It is important that the Head of School (Dean/CEO/President/Director) be present on the first morning of the visit (09:00-10:30) – and in the case of a re-accreditation Visit (10:45-11:45 as well) and the last morning of the visit (12:00-12:45).

This schedule will be reviewed by the EQUIS Office, in collaboration with the Chair and changes to it may be proposed to the School. Schools should not send the draft schedule directly to the Chair or the members of the Peer Review Team. The EQUIS Office will send the schedule to the Peer Review Team once it has been finalised. As a matter of general policy, Schools should not communicate with the Review Team directly prior to the visit except when dealing with logistical matters (e.g. pick-up arrangements at the airport, hotel information, dietary requirements etc.).

The following guidance notes should assist Schools when planning their Peer Review Visit.

#### 3.2 Detailed guidelines for drafting the visit schedule

The visit should be scheduled from 9:00 to no later than 18:30 on days 1 and 2, and from 9:00 to no later than 14:00 on Day 3. The Peer Review Team should be allowed sufficient time alone throughout each day to debrief after a series of meetings and to prepare for the forthcoming sessions. The Team also requires time to study the Base Room materials.

For some interviews, the main panel can be broken up into two sub-teams in order to optimise coverage during the visit. Where this is possible, it is indicated in the list below by an asterisk (\*).

As a general principle, the Peer Review Team expects to see individuals only once unless they have more than one functional role. The sessions should not include too many participants to allow for meaningful discussions (**a maximum number of 10 participants per session**). The School must respect the confidentiality of the different meetings. Therefore, only the participants that are indicated in the agreed visit schedule are allowed to be in the meeting. Serving coffee or snacks, taking photos or video, should be done either before or after meetings. Audio or video recording of the interviews and feedback session is strictly forbidden.

The visit schedule should include sessions on the listed topics and the meetings are normally scheduled in the order indicated in the template below.

Deviations from this template may be proposed by the School to take into account its specific circumstances or in cases of unusual scheduling difficulties. Deviations should be explicitly justified when submitting the draft schedule and will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. In all cases, the School should propose a draft schedule to be reviewed and agreed by the EQUIS Office. Schools should not send the draft schedule to the members of the Peer Review Team. The EQUIS Office will send them the final schedule once it has been agreed.

## 4. The Peer Review Visit

### 4.1 Conduct of Interviews

All meetings and discussions should be conducted in English without the use of simultaneous translation. Participants to the meetings are expected to be physically present as telephone or video conferences are normally not acceptable.

#### Preparation for interviews

It is obvious that the total time available for the visit is extremely limited and that the Team should make good use of its time. Team members need to be conscious throughout of the role of a particular session in the total process for the assessment, e.g.

- Team members need to prepare for interviews and must therefore allow adequate preparation time.
- Having read the Self-Assessment Report, the Peer Review Team should request additional written information, when necessary, in advance of the interviews to facilitate their evaluation.

- Throughout the interviews, individual Team members should be working towards the overall assessment and need to crosscheck facts and complete the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form (see Annex 12). This form is intended to make the work much easier when summarising their findings and writing the final report.

## **4.2 Periodic Debriefing Sessions**

At the end of each major session, it is essential that the members of the Peer Review Team allow themselves enough time to consolidate their findings and to complete all relevant paperwork. This is why it is important to arrange a schedule that allocates regular breaks throughout the visit. These meetings are also necessary to check that the Peer Review Team is on track towards the complete coverage of all the EQUIS standards and is working steadily towards its final assessment.

## **5. Focus of individual meetings during the Visit**

### **5.1 Briefing meeting of the Peer Review Team**

The work of the Peer Review Team will normally begin with a meeting held on the evening before the first day of the visit. It is essential that the team be alone for this meeting.

The purpose of this meeting, which will normally begin at 19:30, is to allow:

- briefing of the Peer Review Team by the Chair
- review of the Self-Assessment Report and identification of the key issues
- identification of any supplementary information to be requested
- agreement on the working methods and allocation of responsibilities within the Peer Review Team, in particular, specific writing assignments for the Peer Review Report to match interest and expertise; the Chair may also invite his fellow team members to lead the discussion for some meetings
- review of the visit schedule and preparation for the meetings (e.g. allocation of team members in the case of parallel meetings).

The School will be required to book a suitable place for this meeting, for example a quiet and relatively isolated table in the hotel restaurant or a separate meeting room in the hotel, where they can have dinner and work undisturbed. The Team will have confidential discussions which the School may not wish being overheard by outsiders.

The Chair should seek to establish the impressions of the other Team members during the first evening in order to identify further information that should be supplied by the School and to prepare the main focus of the interviews.

### **5.2 Initial meeting with the School's Executive Committee**

The visit should start with a meeting with the Executive Committee (i.e. senior management team) of the host School.

This is the opportunity for introductions, confirmation of the schedule and arrangements for the visit. The Peer Review Team can put on the table before the key representatives of the School some of their main concerns after reading the Self-Assessment Report and any requirements for additional information.

This initial session is also an opportunity for the School to present its current situation and explain how it sees the future. It would be quite appropriate to list the key difficulties facing the School to guide the Peer Review Team. This session should also cover how the School approaches issues concerned with Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability.

However, it is also important to stress that using the time as some form of marketing presentation is very unhelpful. Moreover, the formal presentation should not exceed 15 minutes and should not replicate content of the Self-Assessment Report.

### **5.3 *Interviews for Programme Evaluation***

There will be two sessions on programme management. The first on Day 1 will examine the overall Programme Portfolio. This will be followed on Day 2 by an in-depth session on the Selected Programme. The Selected Programme will be chosen by EQUIS from a list of three programmes proposed by the School (typically major programmes) from the programme portfolio listed in the Datasheet.

The interview listed under Overall Programme Portfolio will normally be with senior faculty responsible for Teaching and Learning, e.g. Associate Dean and Directors of Studies for Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes plus relevant senior administrators. The interviews under Selected Programme should be with the individual programme management team, e.g. Programme Director, year group tutors and programme administrators.

For the Selected Programme, some specific documents should be made available in the Base Room, in hard copy or electronically - See Annex 9 – Information & Documents to be provided in the Base Room.

### **5.4 *Meeting with the Department or Subject Area Heads***

The purpose of the session with Heads of Department or Subject Areas or equivalent (academic divisions) is to allow the Peer Review Team to reflect on how faculty resources are managed in the context of the School under review. The participants in this session are usually senior academics but should not be the same persons present in the Faculty session (see below). EQUIS does not use a standard list of main subject areas; these areas depend on the School under review.

### **5.5 *Interviews with the Students***

Students are a very rich source of information. Interviews with students provide an important insight into workload, the professionalism of faculty, the coherency of programmes, the clarity of aims and objectives, the organisation of the

curricula, and the facilities. The interviews with the students should be held in the absence of faculty members, so they can speak freely. In order to interview a sufficiently representative number of students, they may be divided into two groups to be interviewed in parallel. A suitable size for each group of students is between ten and fifteen. Students from very different programmes should not be mixed. The groups should involve students from the Selected Programme chosen for more in-depth assessment.

### **5.6 Interviews with Faculty**

Interviews with faculty members are conducted to discuss issues surrounding research, the design and delivery of programmes, and the overall management of the faculty. Confirmation of issues raised by students can also occur. The interview groups should number between eight and ten faculty members, possibly conducted in parallel. They should be divided by seniority or by length of service in the School.

### **5.7 Meeting with Representatives from the World of Practice**

The purpose of this meeting is to give further evidence of the institution's connections with the business and management world and to assess the impact of such links on the School under review.

There should be no academic or administrative staff members from the Institution participating in this session.

### **5.8 Meeting with Alumni**

The purpose of meeting alumni is to obtain evidence from these stakeholders that the School met their needs and that the institution offers appropriate support to alumni activities for the benefit of both. Some of the alumni participating in this session may have graduated recently but others should be alumni that are now employed and may be at different stages of their professional careers.

There should be no academic or administrative staff members from the Institution attending this session.

### **5.9 Final Team Meeting**

The Team will work in a separate meeting room in the hotel before, during and after dinner at the end of the second full day of interviews to formulate its preliminary assessment and recommendation for accreditation. These will be complemented with information obtained during the last morning.

### **5.10 Final Debriefing Meeting with the School**

The visit finishes with a second meeting with the Executive Committee at the end of the third morning. This session closes the Peer Review and enables the Chair to make a provisional summary of the team's conclusions. A minimum of

45 minutes should be allowed for this meeting. It should be understood, however, that the final debriefing is not the occasion for renewed debate.

### **5.11 Other Interactions with the Peer Review Team**

It is inappropriate for the School to communicate with individual reviewers on review-related matters before, during, or after the Peer Review Visit until the Accreditation Board has taken the final decision. At no point shall reviewers divulge the content of their deliberations to School representatives or third parties.

In exceptional circumstances, Peer Review Teams need to schedule ad hoc meetings during the visit (e.g. meeting with the Dean to communicate team concerns). Any such meeting should be attended by at least two Peer Review Team members in order to maintain transparency of the process.

### **5.12 Entertaining the Peer Review Team**

The School is not expected to entertain the Peer Review Team during their visit and any decision to do so will not influence the outcome of the review. However, the optional reception and buffet at the end of Day 1 could be an opportunity to introduce the School's external partners, connections with practice or alumni to the members of the Peer Review Team.

## **6. Assessment and Feedback during the Visit**

The framework for the EQUIS Peer Review Visit is of course the **EQUIS Standards and Criteria** document, which all members of the Peer Review Team should use during the visit. All of the chapters should be covered and the schedule of interviews should ensure full coverage of these topics. In order to assist the Peer Review Team with this task, an EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form is provided (see Annex 12). Team members should attempt to answer all the summary questions listed.

Throughout the visit, the Peer Review Team should be working through a controlled process for refining their assessment of overall institutional quality and coming to a consensus decision on the recommendation to be made to the Accreditation Board.

The stages involved in this process will be as follows:

1. Individual assessment and completion of documentation, using the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet and the Criteria Evaluation Form described in sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 and shown in full in Annexes 11 and 12.
2. Consolidation of findings in the final team debriefing meeting(s)
  - Agreement on the EQUIS Quality Profile scoring
  - Development of a consensus view on the School's performance with respect to the different criteria, as outlined in the EQUIS Criteria

Evaluation Form, particularly where performance is considered to be Above or Below Standard or there is no obvious consensus

- Agreement on the Peer Review Team's final recommendation on accreditation
- Preparation for the debriefing of the School (oral Report).

3. The debriefing of the School

4. Preparation of the EQUIS Peer Review Report

Each of these stages is discussed in more detail below.

### **6.1 Individual assessment and completion of documents**

This will be an on-going process from the beginning of Day 1, but the Quality Profile Sheet should be largely completed before the team meets on the evening of Day 2 for the final team meeting. The Chair may need to set aside time for individual team members to complete the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet immediately before this meeting in which it will be an essential tool.

### **6.2 Consolidation of findings in the final team debriefing meeting**

The Peer Review Team will need to meet alone, probably for several hours, to complete the documentation and to formulate their assessment and accompanying recommendations. This is best done on the evening of the second day.

There are many different approaches adopted by different Teams and individual Chairs, but experience shows that the use of a rigorous procedure for collecting perceptions facilitates consensus building.

#### **6.2.1 The EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form**

This is a working document that will help Peer Reviewers to build up their own personal assessment of the School. The items listed follow the order in which they appear in the corresponding chapter of the **EQUIS Standards and Criteria** document where a fuller explanation of the criterion will be found. Peer Reviewers should refer to this document in case of doubt as to what is meant.

Peer Reviewers will normally fill in their comments on the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form (see Annex 12) as the review progresses through the first two days. It is very important that this process is carried out rigorously, since the final report will be in large part a synthesis of the documents filled in by the different members of the Peer Review Team. Reviewers are, therefore, asked to write in each of the boxes a full commentary describing what they have observed. It is not sufficient in building up a profile of the School just to respond with single adjectives or yes/no.

The **EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form**, duly filled in, should be given to the Chair at the end of the visit.

## 1. CONTEXT, GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGY

		COMMENTS
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Environment</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding by the School of the environment in which it operates</li> <li>Legitimacy within the national environment</li> </ul>	
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Institutional status</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarity of the School's legal and institutional status</li> </ul>	

*Section of the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form*

### 6.2.2 The EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet

Each of the key items in the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form should not only be described qualitatively but also benchmarked against the EQUIS criteria. This is the role of the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet, which helps the Team to arrive at a balanced assessment, but also fulfils the School's need for feedback.

The EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet (see Annex 11) is used to summarise the team's overall conclusions and is in the form shown below:

		Overall Quality Evaluation			
		ABOVE standard	MEETS standard	BELOW standard	N/A
<b>Chap 1</b>	<b>Context, Governance and Strategy</b>				
1.1	Environment				
1.2	Institutional status				
1.3	External governance				

*Section of the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet*

The EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet summarises the key criteria for each chapter of the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria***. The items listed in the document correspond exactly to those listed in the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form, except that they are shorter in formulation.

The form requires the team to agree one of four possible evaluations for each criterion, i.e.

- **Meets Standard**

The School satisfies the EQUIS standard in this area as defined in the EQUIS Criteria Framework (see page 5). Most positive assessments are

expected to fall in this broad category. It is not to be interpreted as meaning that the School is mediocre or that it barely qualifies at a minimum level.

- **Above Standard**  
The School demonstrates outstanding quality, well above the level required to satisfy the EQUIS standard in this area, where it can be considered as example of “best practice”.
- **Below Standard**  
The School is judged to be below the threshold of the EQUIS standard in this area.
- **N/A**  
Not considered applicable or relevant to the School concerned.

Although many reviewers may naturally be reluctant to do something that looks like ‘ticking boxes’, the rationale for this approach has nothing to do with mechanising the assessment. Its main justification is that it encourages the reviewers to implement a process for arriving at a consensus opinion while identifying discrepancies between the perceptions of different team members, as will be described next.

The EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet is used first of all to structure the work of the Peer Review Team when it meets at the end of the second day of meetings to reach agreement on its assessment.

At the beginning of this meeting, or immediately before, the Chair will invite the members of the team to make a personal evaluation by checking “Above Standard”, “Meets Standard”, “Below Standard” or “Not Applicable” for each assessment criterion. The normal procedure is for each member of the review team to complete the document alone before any discussion has taken place on the assessment of the different items. It is only when each member has committed him/herself to an initial judgement that the Chair opens the debate in order to work towards a common position that will be entered onto a consolidated version of the Profile Sheet. This procedure will rapidly indicate where complete agreement exists among the team members and will also clearly reveal the areas that require careful discussion.

Once the Peer Review Team has reached a final agreement, a consolidated version of the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet will be produced. This will not be modified unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so. Any change will then require the explicit agreement of all members of the Team. The document will be attached to the Peer Review Report and will be submitted to the Accreditation Board. This will be considered as the Team’s interpretation of overall compliance with the EQUIS standards.

### 6.2.3 Formulation of the Peer Review Team’s Assessment and Recommendations

Once the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet has been completed, the Peer Review Team should then be in a position to agree the final recommendation as to whether the School has met the standards for EQUIS Accreditation. If they do

not believe these have been met, then obviously the shortfall has to be fully defined together with a clear statement as to the action necessary to meet the shortfall.

The Peer Review Team may recommend five-year accreditation, three-year accreditation or non-accreditation. These recommendations must be clearly substantiated with reference to observations made in the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form and to the assessment set out in the consolidated EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet.

The Peer Review Team should base its judgement on its interpretation of the EQUIS standards as set out in the document entitled ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria***. This judgement should not be based on simple comparison with other institutions.

#### 6.2.4 Preparation for the debriefing of the School (oral report)

After arriving at a consensus, the Chair should make an inventory of the topics to be treated in the oral presentation. A distinction can be made between a) the main findings that will form the basis of the written report and b) any critical comments that can be brought forward in the oral presentation because the subject matter is best communicated informally.

The Chair will then formulate the content of the oral debriefing, usually in the first part of the morning while the other members of the review team conduct the scheduled interviews. He or she should go through this presentation with the whole team before delivering the final version to the School in the debriefing meeting.

### 6.3 *The debriefing*

The oral presentation at the end of the Peer Review Visit plays a special role in the assessment process. With a great deal of time and energy having been invested by the staff of the School over a period of months, it is important that the feedback provides real value and ‘closes down’ the visit in the right way. Giving feedback is a skilled task, both for individuals and institutions. The rules for good practice that apply to feedback given to individuals are just as valid when applied to institutional feedback:

- adoption of a positive, supportive and constructive approach
- concentration on the key messages that need to be delivered, not on the fine detail
- enumeration of the strengths as well as the weaknesses
- early stressing of positive feedback to create the right climate
- delivery of key points in a clear and concise manner
- presenting more negative feedback in a constructive form that can be accepted
- confirming understanding and acceptance of key development needs
- suggesting alternatives for the way to deal with specific problems
- allowing the recipients to identify the solutions
- providing clear guidance on the necessary action for quality improvement where appropriate.

The debriefing also allows teams to distinguish between feedback provided informally and that contained in a more formal report. There are sometimes findings and conclusions that may not really be suitable for a more public report, yet the panel would like to make more critical statements about a particular aspect of institutional management. In these cases, the oral feedback can be used to formulate strongly worded recommendations to the right audience and in the right place (e.g. the School's main management committee).

The Chair should stress that the feedback represents a form of interim report, since some conclusions may be modified following a full consultation with his/her colleagues, including possible referral of some points to the School's Director. It is not appropriate at this point to divulge the recommendation that the Peer Review Team intends to make to the Accreditation Board. Nor is it appropriate to engage in a discussion of the oral assessment. The School will have an opportunity to respond in writing once the written report is submitted for comment.

## **7. The EQUIS Peer Review Report**

The report is the culmination of the assessment process and is an extremely important document not only for the Accreditation Board but also for the School's management team. The report will have considerable impact within the School so great care should be taken with the wording of key sections, especially where the comments are critical.

### **7.1 Procedure for the Peer Review Report**

1. The Chair consolidates comments from the Team, using the written summaries in the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form and the minutes of the oral presentation.
2. The Chair writes up a first draft of the report and
3. Circulates it to the team for comment where each member is expected to provide input and comment on the draft.
4. The Chair amends the report, taking into account the comments received from the other members of the Peer Review Team, and sends the revised draft, including the consolidated EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet (in a separate file), to the EQUIS Office.
5. The revised version which includes the Peer Review Team's recommendation on accreditation is edited, formatted and proofread by the EQUIS Office and submitted to the School. The editing process is mainly to ensure that the report's documents are complete and coherent and that arguments are well made so as to lead to the recommendation on accreditation and the areas for improvement. Sometimes the editing process leads to the draft report being returned to the PRT Chair for clarification or amendment before it is sent to the Institution for comment.
6. The School responds to any factual inconsistencies or misunderstandings and returns it to the EQUIS Office normally within 10 working days.
7. Following receipt of comments from the School, changes may be made and the final report will be completed by the Chair.

8. The final version is sent to the School (normally within 8 weeks from the date of the Peer Review Visit), which is requested to give its written authorisation for the report to be submitted to the Accreditation Board.
9. Once this authorisation has been obtained, the final report is submitted to the Accreditation Board together with the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet, the most recent Datasheet and, in case of re-accreditation, the EQUIS Accreditation Board letter with the latest accreditation decision.
10. The Peer Review Team members receive the final version of the Peer Review Report after the Accreditation decision.

## 7.2 *Formulating the report*

The Chair writes the Peer Review Report setting out the team's assessment of the School against the EQUIS quality criteria and its recommendation regarding accreditation. Great care should be taken to ensure consistency between the three parts of the Peer Review Report: the conclusions written in the main body of the report, the assessment set out in the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet, and the recommendation regarding accreditation. For instance, the report should fully explain why a particular area has been rated Above Standard or Below Standard. The report must also fully explain the reasons that led the team to make its recommendation on accreditation.

The Peer Review Report should also provide suggestions that will be helpful to the School in planning its future development.

The Report should be sufficiently extensive so as to provide enough evaluation of the School for the Accreditation Board to be able to make a well-informed and rational decision and for the School to receive useful guidance on potential improvements.

## 7.3 *Recommended Format*

*(a different format exists for Schools going through Special Re-accreditation)*

**Length:** 15-20 pages

### **Table of Contents**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Composition of the Peer Review Team
  - name, position and country of each reviewer
  - any additional comments on the Peer Review Team
- 1.2 EQUIS related Background
  - background on the visit: initial or re-accreditation, delay, eligibility reservations, etc.
- 1.3 Institutional Scope
  - institutional focus of the accreditation: limitations and exclusions
- 1.4 Acknowledgements
  - organisation of the visit and flexibility of the School
  - acknowledgements
  - any general comments on the visit
- 1.5 Comments on the SAR and Base Room Materials

## 1.6 Comments on the Student Report

### **2. General Assessment**

#### 2.1 Executive summary of the report (1-2 pages)

#### 2.2 Assessment of progress (in case of re-accreditations) (1 page)

- Development objectives (for schools with 5-year accreditation)
- Areas of Required Improvement (for schools with 3-year accreditation)
- Other recommendations and suggestions in previous report or Accreditation Board letter

#### 2.3 Area(s) of Excellence (optional) (1/2 page)

- Description of any aspect of outstanding quality

### **3. Recommendation to the Accreditation Board**

- for a period of 5 years, indicating areas where the School excels;
- for a period of 3 years, describing the Areas of Required Improvement where the School has not yet fully complied with the EQUIS standards of quality;
- for non-accreditation, giving a detailed justification for this recommendation

### **4. Detailed analysis following the EQUIS Standards & Criteria Framework (10 pages)**

- based on the feedback of the Peer Reviewers following the visit and summarised in the consolidated EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form
- succinct factual information to support the judgement of the Peer Review Team, particularly for issues rated “above” or “below” standard in the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet

#### **Appendix 1 EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet**

#### **Appendix 2: Datasheet**

#### **Appendix 3: EQUIS AB letter with the latest accreditation decision (in case of re-accreditation)**

## **8. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **8.1 Responsibilities of the EQUIS Office**

- to liaise with the School throughout the process
- to advise and assist in the Self-Assessment process
- to fix the timetable for the EQUIS assessment and to set the date of the Peer Review Visit
- to establish the schedule for the Peer Review in liaison with the School
- to ensure there is adequate time between receipt of the Self-Assessment Report and the date of the Peer Review Visit
- to designate the members of the Peer Review Team and to secure the necessary agreement from the School
- to brief the Peer Review Team on the requirements of the EQUIS assessment and to confirm receipt of all necessary supporting materials
- to make the necessary logistic arrangements with the School for travel, accommodation and special requests
- to arrange for the dispatch of materials produced by the School to the members of the Peer Review Team
- to co-ordinate the compilation and finalisation of the Peer Review Report, in liaison with the Chair of the Peer Review Team and the Director of the School, and its presentation to the EQUIS Accreditation Board

- to ensure that the EQUIS Process Evaluation Forms from the school and the Peer Reviewers are completed
- to arrange for the safe disposal of all sensitive materials following acceptance of the report by the School.

## **8.2 Responsibilities of the EQUIS Project Leader within the School**

- to coordinate the Self-Assessment process and the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report
- to ensure the timely production of the materials for the Self-Assessment Report, including annexes and supporting documentation to the main report
- to distribute the final Self-Assessment Report to the EQUIS Office at least 8 weeks before the date of the visit and to the members of the Peer Review Team at least 6 weeks before the date of the visit
- to liaise with the EQUIS Office
- to establish a programme for the Peer Review Visit in collaboration with the EQUIS Office
- to reimburse all travel and accommodation fees for the Peer Review Team within six (6) weeks from the date of the visit.
- to make the necessary practical logistic arrangements for the visit, including local travel and accommodation
- to ensure adequate access to key stakeholders during the visit of the Peer Review Team
- to check the final Peer Review Report for factual inconsistencies
- to complete an EQUIS Process Evaluation Form for Schools and return it on-line to the Quality Assurance Committee at EFMD.

**Important:** Formal communication between the Peer Review Team and the School should always be via the EQUIS or with the EQUIS Office in copy Office (before and after the Peer Review Visit).

## **8.3 Responsibilities of the Individual Peer Review Team members**

### Before the visit

- to liaise with the EQUIS Office and Chair of the Peer Review Team on the requirements of the EQUIS Peer Review Visit
- to prepare themselves adequately about the objectives of the assessment and the criteria used by a careful reading of the EQUIS documents
- to read the Self-Assessment Report carefully and carry out a preliminary SWOT analysis against the EQUIS criteria
- to make appropriate and timely travel arrangements in accordance with the guidelines given by the EQUIS office
- to convey to the School and the EQUIS Office details of their travel arrangements and any special requirements they may have regarding travel and accommodation
- to arrive the evening before the review visit before 19.00 to participate in the team briefing.

### During the visit

- to ensure adequate preparation for all meetings
- to be present throughout the entire Peer Review
- to fulfil specified and agreed responsibilities within the team, such as the provision of specialist expertise
- to act as the main spokesperson for some sessions, as agreed with the Chair
- to document their own findings clearly enough to support the work of the Chair
- to operate in the spirit of consensus. If a Peer Reviewer disagrees with a decision arrived at by the Team, they must nonetheless abide by the majority opinion, while being free to express an opposing view in the Report
- to hand in to the Chair all relevant documentation relating to their personal assessment (notably the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form).

### Following the visit

- to liaise, if necessary, with the Chair and other Peer Review Team members to confirm the final decision on accreditation
- to contribute to the drafting of the final report
- to provide all requested documentation required for reimbursement of travel and accommodation to the School
- to complete an EQUIS Process Evaluation Form for Peer Reviewers and return it on-line to the EQUIS office
- to make arrangements for the destruction of all sensitive materials relating to the visit following acceptance of the final report
- to avoid expressing any opinion or communicating the results of the assessment to any third parties

## **8.4 Responsibilities of the Chair of the Peer Review Team**

### Before the visit

- to check, upon receipt of the Self-Assessment Report (including annexes), Student Report and Datasheet, if all documents are adequate and inform immediately the EQUIS Office of any inconsistencies or problem areas in the reports.
- to approve the Peer Review schedule.

### During the visit

- to brief the members of the Team on the Peer Review process at the initial Briefing Meeting
- to act as the main spokesperson for the Peer Review Team
- to ensure adequate preparation for meetings
- to determine the delegation of lead responsibilities within the Team
- to divide up some sessions and responsibilities to individuals
- to lead the Peer Review Team towards a set of conclusions during the visit
- to ensure that the members of the Team complete the assessment documents before the end of the visit

- to hold a meeting of the Peer Review Team, usually on the evening of the second day, during which the team agrees on its conclusions and recommendation
- to run the debriefing for the School during the final meeting
- to inform urgently the EQUIS Office of any unusual incident that may disrupt the visit.

### Following the visit

- to collect documentation made by the Peer Review Team relating to the satisfaction of the core criteria, in particular the EQUIS Quality Profile sheet and the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form
- to draft a first version of the report and circulate it to the other members of the team for comment
- to send the revised report within 3 weeks of the visit to the EQUIS Office, which will then forward it to the School and invite their comments on the accuracy of the text
- to accommodate changes to the report where necessary, in consultation with the other members of the Peer Review Team, if appropriate
- to issue the final report to the EQUIS Office for submission to the School and the Accreditation Board
- to complete an EQUIS Process Evaluation Form for Peer Reviewers and return it on-line to the EQUIS office.

## **8.5 Role of Reviewers from the World of Practice**

The practitioner dimension is afforded special importance in the EQUIS assessment, as reflected in the creation of two special chapters in the **EQUIS Standards and Criteria** document devoted to Connections with Practice (Chapter 10) and Executive Education (Chapter 6). This dimension is not simply one of the many criteria to be covered within an EQUIS assessment. In just the same way as Internationalisation, it is seen as an overarching framework for all the other chapters. Practitioner presence is also seen as an essential feature of the EQUIS accreditation process, through representation on the EQUIS Committee, Accreditation Board and participation in the Peer Review Teams.

The Reviewer representing the world of practice plays an important role in the Peer Review Team and provides a practitioner perspective within the process by paying special attention to the value of all processes and outcomes to the international business and management community.

## **8.6 Role of Local Reviewers**

The Local Reviewer (initial accreditations) is familiar with the local educational environment and can explain the contextual background of the School for the benefit of the Peer Review Team. He or she is selected in agreement with the School.

The Local Reviewer or another member of the Team will normally speak the language of the country.





## Further Information and Contacts

If you have any questions concerning the EQUIS accreditation system, or would like to receive more information, please consult the EFMD website where all documentation is available to download:

<https://efmdglobal.org/accreditations/business-schools/equis/>

Alternatively, you can contact the EFMD Quality Services Office:

[equis@efmdglobal.org](mailto:equis@efmdglobal.org)



EFMD

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