



# EQUIS STANDARDS AND CRITERIA:

2021 UPDATES – PUBLISHED SUMMER 2021

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## FOREWORD

EFMD revises the documentation supporting EQUIS periodically and updates normally take effect from the start of the following January. The following is an overview of the updates made as part of the 2021 publication, together with an assessment of the significance of the change.

NB: This document represents QED's interpretation of the EQUIS Updates. We recommend that you view the updated documents directly – which are available from EFMD's website:

- [EQUIS Standards and Criteria \(2021\)](#)

Currently, other documents remain as per previous updates

- [EQUIS Process Manual \(2020\)](#)
- [EQUIS Process Manual Annexes \(2020\)](#)
- [EFMD Guidelines and Position Papers \(2019\)](#)
- [Other EQUIS Documents](#)

A summary of the changes is provided below, followed by a more detailed listing.

## SUMMARY OF CHANGES

The majority of changes in the 2021 EQUIS Documents are not significant. The most significant changes relate to

- An increased focus on digitalisation as a topic and an updating of the standards to recognise this;
- Additional guidance and advice on internationalisation;
- An explicit statement of expectations for Schools' responsibility to manage own environmental impact and carbon footprint.

A full list of the changes is provided below, with a summary note on the significance of the change where relevant.

## EQUIS STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

### CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT, GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGY

- Minor wording changes to clarify that the purpose of the Chapter is to "situate the School within the geographical, regulatory, competitive, and technological context within which it operates and, given this, describe its identity, mission and strategic objectives"
- Some subsections have been renamed to better reflect their content (but no other significant change, other than those mentioned below).
- Digitalisation is getting a greater focus within the updated standards. The EQUIS process will "consider how digital technologies not only enable greater scale, efficiency and resilience of the School's operations but also assure better quality of educational experience and outcomes". Changes include:
  - Some references to TEL have been updated to say "online or blended provision" or similar.
  - Digitalisation has been incorporated into the relevant sub-headings within the Chapter as appropriate.
  - A new subsection has been added to focus on Digitalisation – including a focus on how digitalisation is incorporated into the overall strategy of the School and consideration of the impact on quality assurance and on cyber-security.
  - Schools must now include their Cyber Security policy as part of the Self Assessment Report

*(Potentially significant change - but only for Schools whose digitalisation strategies and/or processes are underdeveloped)*

### CHAPTER 2: PROGRAMMES

- The introduction has been largely re-written to clarify EFMD's approach as part of EQUIS accreditation and to include appropriate reference to digitalisation. In summary, EFMD expects Schools to consider the value of technology as an instrument to support teaching and learning strategy across the entire portfolio.
- The subsequent detailed sub-sections within this Chapter have been modified to reflect TEL and other aspects of digitalisation in the context of the re-written introduction
- Some additional subpoints have been added into the appropriate subsections to ensure that
  - explicit reference is made to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience related to a digital world
  - Student assessment and programme evaluation include consideration of the online/digital environment as relevant.
- Two additional criteria have been included within the subsection for Internationalisation – asking Schools to describe the opportunities for students to participate in international project work and/or other learning experiences (whether virtual or face-to-face).
- The notes to the chapter make reference to EPAS programme accreditation criteria. This material is now rebranded as EFMD Accredited material on the EFMD website.

*(Potentially significant changes - but only for Schools whose digitalisation strategies and/or processes are underdeveloped)*

### CHAPTER 3: STUDENTS

- Minor update to reflect the focus on digitalisation throughout this update

*(No material changes)*



#### CHAPTER 4: FACULTY

- An additional paragraph has been added to the Introduction to reflect on the impact of digitalisation on faculty teaching, research, development and other related activities.
- Faculty information about the *distribution of faculty by nationality* has been extended to explicitly cover *international experience*. The summary list of core faculty is also expected to include international experience (already included on the Faculty Summary Table).
- Several amendments made to reflect the focus on digitalisation throughout this update

*(Minor changes and clarifications only)*

#### CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

- The wording of the **EQUIS standard** has been extended to add the sentence "*The School should also demonstrate broad stakeholder involvement in the knowledge creation, development and diffusion processes.*"
- The description of **Pedagogic Development and Innovation** (the third category of research under the EQUIS standards) has been updated to reflect on the impact of teaching methods (including online and blended learning) on student learning, behaviours and experience. EFMD also confirms that Schools may "*report on innovative course designs or programmes inasmuch as they provide the pedagogical rationale underpinning the innovations*" as part of reporting this category of research.
- Some amendments made to reflect the focus on digitalisation throughout this update
- The suggested outline for Table 2 (which outlines the Research Output of Core Faculty over the last five years) has been amended. However, as before, the Table is a guide and Schools are permitted to amend the table to reflect the research output of their organisations

*(Should not constitute a substantial change – though some Schools may need to consider whether there are additional activities that should be considered within the context of research and development.)*

#### CHAPTER 6: EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

- The wording of the **EQUIS standard** has been extended to clarify that Schools put their "*distinctive expertise at the disposal of practising managers in support of their lifelong learning needs and of organisations in support of their development goals*".
- Additional clarification is added to the introduction to note the potential for schools to leverage Executive Education programmes to broaden its "*distinctive knowledge base expertise*"
- Content within the subsections has been rearranged to for a more logical 'flow' within the Standard:
  - Subsection on *Marketing and Sales* has been extended to include *Corporate Relations*.
  - Guidelines related to programme design have been moved from the section on *Programme Quality and Impact* to a new section on *Programme Design* (and the wording of these has been amended to more clearly reflect programme design principles for both open and customised programmes.
  - Several other points have been relocated to more appropriate sections (but no changes to expectations)
  - Wording relating to the School's experience in dealing with senior executives etc has been removed.
- Some amendments made to reflect the focus on digitalisation throughout this update, including
  - General updates to existing guidelines to reflect digitalisation throughout executive education;



- New sub-section on Digital Integration (section e) – which covers the strategy, operations and impact of digitalisation within Executive Education (including links to research and consulting activities).
- The faculty subsection links participation in Executive Education to faculty development (or as a leverage for faculty development). It also encourages cross departmental and external partnerships to extend the reach of programmes.

*(No material changes: Amendments reflect clarification and advice)*

## CHAPTER 7: RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION

- Minor change to the wording of the **EQUIS standard** to specify “resources” rather than “physical resources”. “Resources” are described as on-campus (physical), digital and financial resources.
- Several amendments have been made to accommodate the focus on digitalization throughout the update, including a required description of the virtual learning environment and any other digital tools used to support learning.

*(No material changes: Amendments reflect clarification and advice)*

## CHAPTER 8: INTERNATIONALISATION

- Minor change to the wording of the **EQUIS standard** to include the potential for virtual (as well as on-campus) student exchanges.
- Several amendments have been made to accommodate the focus on digitalization throughout the update, including:
  - Explicitly recognising the role of digitalisation in finding innovative approaches to strengthening internationalisation (Introduction).
  - Reminding Schools that the legitimacy of an approach to internationalisation needs to be considered in the context of the School’s overall strategy.
  - Clarifying that the threshold requirement (for EQUIS) of offering programmes that provide an internationally oriented education with sufficient outreach beyond a school’s own borders can be met where this outreach is achieved through a mix of physical and/or virtual mobility.
  - Adding reference to digitalisation (as appropriate) into the various subsections.
- The introduction refers to internationalisation in research by engaging in international research groups and possibly receiving international research grants, as well as achieving international research impact.
- Content within the subsections has been rearranged to for a more logical ‘flow’ within the Standard (in addition to accommodating the focus on digitalisation)
- If applicable, documents relating to online provision that specifically targets foreign markets are required to be included in the Base Room.
- Additional advice suggests referring to Annex H (Assessing the Degree of Internationalisation of a Business School” (in addition to Annex G) in the EFMD Guidelines and Position Papers publication ([https://www.efmdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/EFMD\\_Global-EQUIS\\_Guidelines\\_and\\_Position\\_Papers.pdf](https://www.efmdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/EFMD_Global-EQUIS_Guidelines_and_Position_Papers.pdf))
- **Key Indicators** and the **EQUIS Internationalisation Model** have been updated to accommodate digitalisation / virtual mobility options.

*(No material changes: Amendments reflect clarification and advice)*



## CHAPTER 9: ETHICS, RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Minor change to the wording of the **EQUIS standard** to include reference to digitalisation and "the increasingly global world".
- Several amendments have been made to accommodate the focus on digitalization throughout the update, including:
  - A new subpoint, requiring schools to summarise the ethical framework/policy used when dealing with personal information (students, staff, other stakeholders)
  - Asking schools to outline if/how they embrace an open eco-system and participate in co-creation of knowledge taking advantage of possibilities offered by digitalised work environments in academia and business.
- Schools are now required to report on how they are contributing to the global environmental protection agenda – including monitoring of own carbon footprint.

*(Potentially significant change - but only for Schools whose commitment to sustainability and global environmental agenda is underdeveloped)*

## CHAPTER 10: CONNECTIONS WITH PRACTICE

- Additional guidance has been added to some of the subsections – outlining the type of descriptions that Schools might wish to include in the narrative for this Chapter.

*(No material changes: Amendments reflect clarification and advice)*

## EQUIS PROCESS MANUAL AND ANNEXES

No updates to the EQUIS Process Manuals or Annexes have been published to date (5 July 2021). Hence, the 2020 Versions of these documents remain relevant, unless noted below OR otherwise informed by EFMD

### ANNEX 2 - EQUIS DATASHEET

*Superseded by the 2021 Datasheet*

EQUIS publishes the most recent Datasheet directly on its website. This should be the version used by Schools. The current version is marked as the 2021 version. This current paper-based datasheet is expected to be replaced (timing tbc) by the new **online XO Platform**, which is currently being piloted by EFMD.

Changes between the 2020 and 2021 Datasheet can be summarised as follows:

- Under "The Degree Programme Portfolio"
  - a simple table has been provided to summarise MBA information (presentation change only)
  - The instruction to exclude previous EPAS accredited programmes from the list of potential 'selected programmes' has been removed.
- Under "Overview of the School's Research Activities":
  - A simple table has been provided to summarise the faculty workload model (presentation change only)
- The section on TEL has been renamed "Online Learning" and the guidance updated to reflect the overall update on digitalisation, and to ask schools to provide examples of approaches used (blended, hybrid, online etc)
- Some additional headings have been provided within the sections on National Standing and Accreditation. (presentation changes only)
- **ADDITIONAL TABLE required as a subset of Table 4** – outlining the top three most frequent home countries of non-national students.
- Minor changes to row-descriptors on Table 5 (Summary Financial Information)
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### ANNEX 3: EQUIS FEE SCHEDULE

*Superseded by the 2021 Fee Schedule*

- Most fees have increased in the region of .57%. The full fee schedule is [available here](#).

For advice and further details on any of the above, please contact the QED Accreditation Team at [info@QEDaccreditation.com](mailto:info@QEDaccreditation.com).

