EQUIS STANDARDS AND CRITERIA:

2023 UPDATES – AS AT 14 FEB 2023

EFMD revises the documentation supporting EQUIS periodically and updates take effect from the start of January of the year of update (or as otherwise communicated). The following is an overview of the updates made as part of the Feb 2023 publication, together with an assessment of the significance of the change.

As always, QED recommends that all schools within the EQUIS accreditation process (whether initial or renewal) should review and ensure they have understood the changes and clarifications.

N.B.: This document represents QED's interpretation of the EQUIS Updates. We recommend that Schools view the updated documents directly. These are available from EFMD's website in the following formats:

- EQUIS Standards and Criteria (2023)
- EQUIS Process Manual (2023)
- EQUIS Process Manual Annexes (2023)

QED's overview of the changes is provided below, plus a more detailed summary of the changes on a document by document basis (Appendices 1, 2 and 3).

OVERVIEW OF CHANGES

There are no significant changes to the EQUIS Standards and Criteria, though clarification and guidance points have been added in several areas. However, there are some process changes which should be noted by Schools:

- The traditional Base Room has been replaced by an Online Document Repository (ODR)
- In several discreet areas, additional documents are now specifically required in English, rather than a School's native language (These were optional in previous years).
- In some key areas, EFMD has confirmed that it is appropriate to cross-reference from the SAR to the Datasheet (where information may be duplicated).

Other points of potential significance are:

- In exceptional circumstances, the post-eligibility period may be extended from two years to four years.
- References to the *EFMD Guidelines and Position Papers* have now been removed from the Standards. In addition, these documents have been removed from the section of the website dealing with EQUIS accreditation.
- Key EQUIS fees have increased by 10% (Application Fee, Eligibility Fee, Review Fees.

An overview of the significance of the changes is provided in Figure 1, with a detailed summary of the changes in Appendices 1 -3

Figure 1: Summary of Significance of Changes to EQUIS Documents (15 February 2023)

Level of Change	Standards and Criteria (Appendix 1)	EQUIS Process Manual (Appendix 2)	EQUIS Process Manual Annexes (Appendix 3)
No material changes made (or no changes made)	All other areas not noted below	All other areas not noted below	All other areas not noted below
Some changes, but unlikely to be substantial (may include clarifications or advice)	• Introduction • Chapter 2 • Chapter 3 • Chapter 5 • Chapter 7 • Chapter 9 • Chapter 10	• Section 2 • Section 3 (other than Stages 5 and 6)	• Annex 20
Some changes: possible administrative impact	• Important Notes (new Section)	• Important Notes (new Section) • Section 3, Stage 6 • Section 4 • Section 6	• Annex 2 • Annex 3 • Annex 7 • Annex 9 • Annex 10 • Annex 21 • Annex 23
Potential significant presentation change for Schools whose primary language is not English	• Chapter 1 • Chapter 3 • Chapter 4 • Chapter 5 • Chapter 6 • Chapter 8 • Chapter 9 • Chapter 10	--	• Annex 9
Some Changes: possible substantial impact (depending on school)	• Chapter 1 • Chapter 4	• Section 3, Stage 5	• Annex 9
Substantial Change	---	---	---

APPENDIX 1: DETAILED SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN EQUIS STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

IMPORTANT NOTES (NEW SECTION)

A new section has been added, to list key summary notes linked to key topics. These can be summarised as:

- Assurances of privacy and confidentiality linked to Peer Reviewers, EFMD Advisors and School-related data
- Standard statement linked to the regular updating of standards and the responsibility of Schools to use the latest versions.
- Statement of expectation that peer review visits will be face-to-face in 2023, unless further restrictions are imposed.
- Confirmation that the traditional Base Room has been largely replaced by the Online Document Repository (ODR). Whilst Peer Review Teams (PRTs) will still require a Base Room during a Peer Review Visit (PRV), any additional data (i.e. not included within the SAR and related submission) should be provided electronically through the ODR two weeks before the start of a visit. (N.B. Annex 9 in the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes sets out basic guidance for the ODR.)

This new section confirms practices already in place. For Schools entering re-accreditation (where a previous accreditation may have required a more traditional Base Room), the expectation of an ODR should be noted.

INTRODUCTION

- Some rewording around the context of EQUIS accreditation as being a "uniquely international framework" with a focus on diversity and cross-border development. It continues to express recognition of diversity across regions within the context of expecting accredited schools to meet the commonly agreed standards.
- Specific reference is made to the fact that an MBA programme is NOT a requirement for EQUIS accreditation.
- References to the Base Room have been replaced by references to the Online Document Repository (or ODR) - including reference to additional guidance for the ODR in Annex 9 of the [EQUIS Process Manual Annexes (2023)](#)

No material change, but confirmation of EFMD's continued emphasis on internationalisation within the context of EQUIS accreditation.

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT, GOVERANANCE AND STRATEGY

- Some minor word changes throughout.
- Within 1j, a bullet point relating to the communication of policy and strategy among stakeholders has been removed. *QED interprets this as no real change, but perhaps just reduction of duplication (as the point is effectively captured within the wider chapter)*
- A School's Cyber Security Policy is now only required in the ODR (not as part of the SAR)
- Documents describing the Strategic Plan and related policies must now be provided in English (in the ODR). This was previously listed as "if possible".
- The Risk Register is now specified for inclusion in the ODR.

(Potentially significant presentation change - but primarily for Schools whose core strategic documents have traditionally been presented in a language other than English and/or Schools who have under-developed Risk Registers)

CHAPTER 2: PROGRAMMES

- Some minor word changes throughout.
- Part 2h (Internationalisation) includes two additional guidance points, linked to the use of technology to support international learning experiences and the related objectives (and quality metrics) for such virtual experiences (in comparison to more traditional exchange opportunities)
- Part 2i (ERS) includes an additional guidance question for the assessment of ERS-related competencies.
- ODR requirements no longer make reference to 'programme sets'. There are no other changes to the ODR requirements.

(Minor changes and clarifications only)

CHAPTER 3: STUDENTS

- In the Introduction, "*experience outside the home country*" has been removed from the paragraph outlining important attributes for the School to promote. However, the "*ability to function in a diverse multicultural environment*" is more strongly noted by the addition of the word 'diverse'. (mid-way down page 31)
- For the ODR, the table showing the profile of each student cohort must now be provided in English (no previously specified).

(Primarily clarification and additional guidance. There is a presentation change for Schools who may have previously presented the Student Cohort Table in a language other than English)

CHAPTER 4: FACULTY

- Within the introduction, EFMD has clarified the expectation linked to faculty strategy, including related processes and supports (final paragraph)
- For documentation within the SAR, EFMD has clarified that Schools can cross reference to Table 2 in the Datasheet rather than duplicate the information (Distribution of core faculty by academic department) in the SAR.
- For the ODR, a *Strategic Plan for Faculty Management, Development and Promotion* must be provided in English (instead of the previous required HR strategy document).
- The Notes section has been updated to include a fuller definition of Core Faculty (previously provided on the Datasheet).

(Primarily clarification and additional guidance. There is a presentation change for Schools who may have previously presented a limited HR Strategy; or a Faculty Strategy in a language other than English)

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- There are wording changes throughout the introduction, but these appear to reflect clarification only.
- Additional guidance questions are included in Section 5a (Research Activities), linked to research funding.
- An additional guidance question is included in Section 5d (ERS) asking Schools to describe any research centres (or similar units) that focus on sustainability issues.

- For the ODR, key documents (including the research strategy, policy documents, descriptions of research centres etc) must be provided in English.

(Primarily clarification and additional guidance. There is a potentially significant presentation change for Schools who may have previously presented key research documents in a language other than English)

CHAPTER 6: EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

- Minor wording changes
- For the ODR, the Executive Education strategy, policy and process documents must be provided in English.

(Primarily clarification and additional guidance. There is a presentation change for Schools who may have previously presented strategy and policy documents in a language other than English)

CHAPTER 7: RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION

- Minor wording changes
- In section 7c, additional guidance questions are provided in relation to financial autonomy. These include a description of the extent that school-level surpluses are available for investment within the school and how losses are handled.
- An additional guidance question is included in Section 7d (Risk management) – related to the oversight and governance of risk management.
- In Section 7h, reference to a HR Strategy has been updated to "*a strategy for management and development*"
- For documentation within the SAR, EFMD has clarified that Schools can cross reference to Table 5 in the Datasheet rather than duplicate the information (Financial Data) in the SAR.
- The marketing strategy/plan should now be provided in the ODR (not as an appendix to the SAR).

(Minor changes and clarifications only)

CHAPTER 8: INTERNATIONALISATION

- Minor wording changes
- For the ODR, the Internationalisation strategy and policy documents must be provided in English.

(Primarily clarification and additional guidance. There is a presentation change for Schools who may have previously presented strategy and policy documents in a language other than English)

CHAPTER 9: ETHICS, RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Minor wording changes
- There are no changes to requirements for documents within the SAR, but Annex 8 (EQUIS Process Manual Annexes) clarifies that schools should include a brief description of institutional (not just School) projects linked to ERS

- For the ODR, all documents specified for inclusion must be provided in English. These include a representative sample/selection of educational materials, research outputs, ERS relevant policies and reports and minutes of committee meetings dealing with ERS issues.

(Primarily clarification and additional guidance. There is a significant presentation change for Schools who may have previously presented ERS related documents in a language other than English)

CHAPTER 10: CONNECTIONS WITH PRACTICE

- Minor wording changes
- For documentation within the SAR,
    - EFMD has clarified that if the relevant information on partners from the world of practice has been included within the Datasheet, that Schools should cross reference from the SAR accordingly.
    - Annex 8 (EQUIS Process Manual Annexes) clarifies that schools should include clients (in addition to partners) in the list of principle partners from the world of practice.
- For the ODR, the strategy and policy documents relating to the School's connections with practice must be provided in English.

(Primarily clarification and additional guidance. There is a significant presentation change for Schools who may have previously presented ERS related documents in a language other than English)

APPENDIX 2: DETAILED SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN EQUIS PROCESS MANUAL

- There are minor clarifications and word changes throughout. These are not significant.

IMPORTANT NOTES (NEW SECTION)

- A new section has been added to the EQUIS Process Manual, to list key summary notes linked to key topics. These are as set out at the start of the EQUIS Standards and Criteria document (outlined above) plus an additional note to confirm that the key EQUIS documents (Standards, Process Manual and Annexes) are available on the EFMD website.

This new section confirms practices already in place. For Schools entering re-accreditation (where a previous accreditation may have required a more traditional Base Room), the expectation of an ODR should be noted.

SECTION 2: MANAGEMENT OF EQUIS

- Part 4: The EQUIS Accreditation Board (AB) now meets at least four times per annum (previously three times)

(Not significant: Represents additional clarification and guidance)

SECTION 3: THE EQUIS ACCREDITATION PROCESS

- All references to the Data Sheet submission now refer to the EFMD online platform (OX). Login credentials etc are provided to applicants by the EQUIS Office (on request).

STAGE 0: ENQUIRY

- The narrative for Stage 0 has been amended to reflect the more consultative approach to initial discussions with a school interested in EQUIS accreditation. It continues to be strongly recommended by EFMD.

STAGE 2: ONLINE BRIEFING (OB)

- Stage 2 of the initial accreditation process has been amended to an Online Briefing (OB), followed by a Briefing Report. (It was previously a Briefing Visit – in person, followed by a Briefing Visit Report). This section of the Process Manual has been updated accordingly, setting out the key elements of the process. Two points are particularly notable:
    o The OB is expected to take place within three months of submitting an application to the EQUIS process.
    o Schools have two years from the OB to submit an application of eligibility. If this time is exceeded, the School must submit an updated Datasheet and Progress Report outlining progress made on any items outlined in the Briefing Report.

STAGE 5: ELIGIBILITY

- The guidance for post-eligibility has been updated to state the under exceptional circumstances, the EC (EQUIS Committee) may extend the eligibility period to four years (instead of two).

- EFMD clarifies that Schools re-entering the eligibility process (whether because of failing eligibility or because the eligibility period has expired) at Stage 4 (as well as those re-entering at Stage 3) within 2-5 years must provide an updated Datasheet and a Progress Report.
- Additional clarification has been provided for Schools that are re-applying for eligibility (i.e. after five years) – including the requirement to provide a formal email; an application form, updated datasheet and a Progress Report.

STAGE 6: SELF ASSESSMENT

- Hard-copies of the SAR and related documents now only needed to be provided to the Peer Review team on request. (However, the School is required to check with each reviewer – as set out by EFMD in Section 6, Part 2.2 of the Process Manual)

STAGE 8: ACCREDITATION

- Updates on guidance for Schools re-applying for eligibility are consistent with the update to Stage 5 above.

STAGE 10: REACCREDITATION

- EFMD clarifies that Schools that hold an EFMD Programme Accreditation have a choice regarding the assessment of the Selected Programme (cross referenced to the new Annex – *Annex 23: EQUIS Policy on Re-Accreditation of Schools with EFMD Programme Accreditation*)

The majority of updates represent additional clarification and guidance. Key areas to note are:

- *Stage 5: There is potential significance for some schools with the introduction of the possibility that the post-eligibility period can be extended to four years in exceptional circumstances.*
- *Stage 6: There is potential (positive) administrative impact as the SAR and related documents only have to be produced in hard copy when required by members of the PRT.*

SECTION 4: ONLINE BRIEFING GUIDELINES

The overall objectives and focus of the Online Briefing is aligned with the previous Briefing Visit. Section 4 has been updated to reflect the change from in-person to online. Key changes include:

- Shorter, more focused sessions
- Reduced limits in the number of participants in each session
- Guidelines for basic camera etiquette

(Some Changes: possible administrative impact)

SECTION 6: GUIDANCE FOR PEER REVIEW

- Part 1: Introduction: Examples of factors contributing to a successful peer review visit have been updated to include a comprehensive ODR and confidentiality relating to facts and figures.
- Part 2: Preparation for the Visit
    - Part 2.1: Reading Material for the Peer Reviewers has been updated to remove the Guidelines and Position Papers.
    - Part 2.4: Guidance for the Base Room has been updated in the context of the ODR. The updated guidance sets out the expectation that a computer will be provided for EACH member of the PRT (previously only one computer was required).

- o Section 2.5 is new and sets out general guidance for the ODR
- Part 5: Focus of individual meetings during the visit
  - o Part 5.1 is updated to reflect the fact that the initial Briefing Meeting of the PRT now takes place online (at least one week before the visit) – in addition to a meeting in the hotel the evening before the first day of the visit. This reflects the PRTs access to the ODR etc in advance of the visit.
  - o Additional guidance for meetings to review (i) development objectives; (ii) external governance; (iii) research; (iv) Finances, Resources and Control have been added. The traditional meeting for *Department or Subject Area Heads* is now called the *Faculty Management Meeting*
- Part 8: Roles and Responsibilities
  - o Part 8.4 includes additional responsibilities of the Chair to organise the initial briefing meeting online, in advance of the formal visit.

(Some Changes: possible administrative impact)

APPENDIX 3: DETAILED SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN EQUIS PROCESS MANUAL ANNEXES

ANNEX 2: EQUIS DATASHEET

Schools are required to submit (and update) their datasheet using the EQUIS online platform (OX). Annex 2 includes a sample datasheet, to illustrate the type and format of data required. It is not expected to be used for formal submission. Key changes to the datasheet, as based on the sample template, are as follows:

- Guidance that relates specifically to hard copy submission of this report has been removed and replaced (where relevant) with guidance linked to the OX platform.
- Tables 4 and 5 (in addition to the previous Appendices 1-3) do not count against the page limit (16 pages);
- Degree Programme Portfolio (and Table 4):
  o EFMD confirms that 1 full time student = 1 FTE.
  o Attention is drawn to Annex 23 for schools the hold EFMD Programme accreditation (in the context of the selected programme)
- Overview of the School's Research Activities: Additional guidance is provided for faculty workload, including clarification that up to five different workload models may be included.
- Executive Education
  o Minor modifications to the overall description of this section
  o Schools now confirm (box tick) whether Executive Education has been excluded by the EQUIS committee and/or whether they have no executive education activity
- Overview of the Principal Links with the World of Practice: A new table has been included to capture the list of partners. (just a format change). EFMD also clarifies that a partner can be included more than once (within the table) for multiple interactions.
- Facilities: The limited of half a page to outline Facilities has been removed.
- Table 4:
  o Some of the headings in Table 4 have been modified, with minor amendments to content
  o The table for Non-national student distribution is now called Table 4a. A percentage calculation is also required (in addition to number of students)
- Appendix 2 (Multi-Campus Operations) includes a check box to mark if not applicable
- Appendix 3 (Collaborative Provision) includes a check box to mark if not applicable
  o Table 9a now includes the name of the Programme at the top of the table.
  o Table 9a requires incoming and outgoing numbers of students (in addition to the total number of participants who have completed the programme).

(Some Changes: possible administrative impact)

ANNEX 3: EQUIS FEE SCHEDULE

- Key EQUIS fees (application, Eligibility, Review etc) have increased by circa 10%. The full fee schedule is [available here](#).

(Some Changes: possible administrative impact)

ANNEX 7: EQUIS PEER REVIEW VISIT SCHEDULE – TEMPLATES

- 'Subject Specialisms' meeting (traditionally end of Day 1 for Initial Accreditation visits) has been removed from the templates. QED believes it is because the topics are covered in other meetings (particularly Faculty Management meeting).
- Faculty Meeting: EFMD has clarified that the two groups are split by 'senior' and 'junior')

- The previous "Financial Management and Control" meeting is now amended to "Financial Management, Resources and Control". Additional attendees include those responsible for other professional resources within the School (Administration, Marketing, Facilities). N.B. Representatives of support services still attend the usual 'Support Services' meetings. The change relates to those responsible for the overall resourcing of these services.
- Where applicable, additional guidance has been noted for Schools that also hold EFMD Programme accreditation (linked to the Selected Programme meeting in Reaccreditation Visits)

(Some Changes: possible administrative impact)

ANNEX 9: DOCUMENTS TO BE PROVIDED IN THE ONLINE DOCUMENT REPOSITORY

- This Annex includes basic guidance for the ODR and has been updated in line with changes within the EQUIS Standards and Criteria.

(Potentially significant, depending on the School - particularly for Schools whose primary language is not English)

ANNEX 10: TEMPLATE FOR THE STUDENT REPORT

- EFMD has stated that the number of students contributing to the student report should be between 15 (minimum) and 25 (maximum).

(Some Changes: possible administrative impact)

ANNEX 20: APPEALS PROCEDURES

- Point 5: The appointment of three members of the EFMD Board to an appeals committee is now undertaken by the Chair of the EFMD Board (previously the President of EFMD).
- Point 9. The conclusions of the Appeals Committee are now presented to the EFMD Chairman of the Board and the EFMD President (instead of the EFMD President and EFMD Director General)

(Update and clarification only)

ANNEX 21: EQUIS POLICY ON INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND RESTRUCTURING

- Some minor word changes throughout, including updating references to integrate the OX platform where appropriate.
- The requirement for an EQUIS expert to visit the school (to assess the situation) has been replaced by a meeting online with the School's management team.

(Some Changes: possible administrative impact)

ANNEX 23: EQUIS POLICY ON RE-ACCREDITATION OF SCHOOLS WITH EFMD PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

- This is a new annex, codifying practices for Schools in the EQUIS re-accreditation process that already hold an EFMD Programme Accreditation. In summary, such schools have the choice, but are not obliged, to include a 'selected programme' within the EQUIS reaccreditation process. Please see the Annex for additional guidance and requirements.

(Some Changes: possible administrative impact)

For advice and further details on any of the above, please contact the QED Accreditation Team at info@QEDaccreditation.com