Responsible Bodies

The following bodies participate in evaluating higher education:

- The Agence d’évaluation de la recherche et de l’enseignement supérieur (AERES–Evaluating Agency for Evaluating Research and Higher Education)
- The Comité national d’évaluation des établissements publics à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel (CNE–National Committee for Evaluating Schools of a Scientific, Cultural and Vocational Nature)
- Inspection générale de l’administration de l’éducation nationale et de la recherche (IGAENR–Inspection General of the Administration of National Education and Research)
- The Haut conseil de l’évaluation (HCE–High Evaluation Council)

Higher education institutions also contribute to assessing the system by implementing internal assessment procedures.

L’Agence d’évaluation de la recherche et de l’enseignement supérieur (AERES)

AERES is an independent administrative authority, created by the framework law of 18 April 2006 for research. The following is the remit assigned it:

- evaluating research institutions and bodies, higher education and research institutions, scientific co-operation institutions and foundations as well as the National Research Agency, taking into account the whole range of their remits and activities
- evaluating the research activities conducted by the research units of the above-mentioned institutions and bodies, with the agency carrying out these assessments either directly or with support from institutions and bodies according to procedures it has validated
- evaluating the education courses and diplomas of higher education institutions
- validating the procedures for assessing the staff of institutions and bodies and giving its advice on the conditions in which they are implemented. This means evaluating procedures, not people.

AERES can also participate in assessing foreign and international research and higher education bodies. The agency has been recognised by ENQA and the European Register of Assessing Agencies.

For its assessment work, the Agency uses many experts with different training, culture and nationalities. Each expert is appointed by the AERES board, composed of 25 French and international members, each appointed by decree:

- nine different persons, a third of whom work in private research
- seven members work as researchers, engineers or teacher-researchers on proposals by the directors or presidents of higher education and research institutions and research bodies
- seven members as researchers, engineers or teacher-researchers, on proposals by assessment agencies of people experienced in higher education and research
- two parliamentarians, members of the parliamentary office of assessment for scientific and technological choices

Council members may not simultaneously run a higher education institution or a research body, chair the national committee of scientific research (CoNRS) or any other evaluation agency, or be a member of the Conseil National des Universités (CNU) or of the Conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche (CNESER) or of the Conseil supérieur de la recherche et de la technologie (CSRT).

The Council ensures the consistency of the agency's assessment procedures and underwrites the quality of AERES evaluations.

**The Comité national d'évaluation des établissements publics à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel (CNE-National Assessment Committee of Institutions of a scientific, cultural and vocational nature)**

Created in 1984 the National Evaluation Committee is an independent administrative authority. It's remit is to assess all public institutions of a scientific, cultural and vocational nature, i.e. universities, schools and higher institutions governed by the Minister of Higher Education.

The Committee examines and assesses the activities carried out by all institutions, and by each one of them, in the fields corresponding to the remits of higher education institutions: initial and ongoing education; scientific and technical research as well as the enhancement of its results; the dissemination of culture and scientific and technical information; international co-operation.

While carrying out this remit, the analysis of the National Evaluation Committee covers all the actions and means implemented by institutions as part of their scientific and educational policies. The Committee, moreover, draws up a summary assessment of the state of higher education

The national assessment committee is made up of twenty five members, appointed by decree after a decision made in a council of ministers, i.e.:

I - 19 French or international members representative of the scientific community, including:
   1 - eleven members chosen from a proposed list of eleven names presented respectively by:
      - the presidents of the sections of the National Council of Universities
      - the presidents of sections of the national committee of scientific research
      - the Institut de France
   2 - three members chosen from a list of nine names presented by the office of the conference of university presidents
   3 - one member chosen from a list of three names presented by the office of the conference of engineering schools and training programmes
   4 - one member chosen from a list of three names proposed by directors of university institutes for training secondary-school teachers
   5 - three members with their principle role as teachers and researchers in a foreign higher education body upon a proposal from the Ministry of Higher Education upon the advice of the European University Association.

II - Four French or foreign persons qualified for their skills in economics and research, appointed upon
the advice of the economic and social council upon a proposal by the Minister of Higher Education

III – A member of the Conseil d’État, chosen from a list of three names proposed by the Conseil d'État vice-chairman

IV - One member from the Cour des Comptes, chosen from a list of three names proposed by this jurisdiction

One of the members of the National Assessment Committee is appointed chairman of this committee. The committee members are appointed for a non-renewable four-year period.

L’inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche (IGAENR)

The IGAENR's annual working programme is defined by the ministers in a mission statement and includes, among other activities, the carrying out of missions and studies in the fields of higher education and research. These thematic studies are the subjects of reports intended for the ministers and may be made public.

Haut conseil de l’évaluation

Upon a request by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Haut conseil de l’évaluation issues opinions and may formulate proposals about teaching, programmes, organisation and results of the educational system and the training of teachers.

Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance

The assessment of the state of the French higher education system relies on both external and internal evaluations.

External evaluations

Various aspects of higher education and research are submitted to external evaluation, in particular the following:

- schools
- research units
- training courses and diplomas

The bodies responsible for the external evaluation of higher education (AERES, CNE, IGAENR, HCE) are involved in assessing one or several of these aspects. Each body has its own approach.

As an example, the following is the AERES procedure for assessing schools.
This agency assesses the institution's capacity for understand itself, determine and follow objectives in the framework of the general outlines decreed by the State, detect dysfunctions and implement actions for improvement. The agency pays particular attention to policy conducted by institutions towards students and student life.

An institution's assessment is done in several stages: preparation, visits and feedback. The process is the following:

- deposit of files (the institution’s organisational chart, current four-year contract with the State, a
self-assessment report prepared by AERES and filled out by the institution, etc.);
- examination of the files
- preparatory meeting by the expert committee
- expert committee's visit to the institution
- feedback meeting
- validation of the report by AERES
- report sent to the institution for its observations
- publication of the assessment report with the institution's observations on the AERES Internet site

**Internal evaluations**

In conformity with the autonomy principle for institutions, reinforced by the LRU, the first responsibility in managing the teaching quality of higher education falls to the institution itself, which lays the foundations for instilling responsibility in the university system itself as part of the national quality framework.

Procedures for self-assessment (or internal assessment) are implemented in institutions under the urging and follow-up of AERES and the DNE. Self-assessment tools are placed at the disposal of institutions by these bodies, as for example the Livre des références (LDR-Reference Book) by the CNED. This tool is composed of three chapters (training policy, scientific policy and management) that respond to the basic remits of universities. The institution is led to identify its strengths, its weaknesses and its progress; it acquires a global view of how it works.

Internal evaluations may be done in a one-off manner or as an ongoing process.

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