



EQUIS
European Quality Improvement System

The EFMD accreditation for international business schools

THE EQUIS PROCESS MANUAL



www.efmd.org



EUROPEAN QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM



THE EQUIS PROCESS MANUAL

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Section 1: INTRODUCTION TO EQUIS

EQUIS – the European Quality Improvement System

EQUIS is an international system of strategic review, quality improvement and accreditation for the assessment of schools¹ 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 was from the outset an international construct, designed to provide a framework to cope with diversity and to offer schools a powerful tool for their cross-border development.

Giving diversity a framework

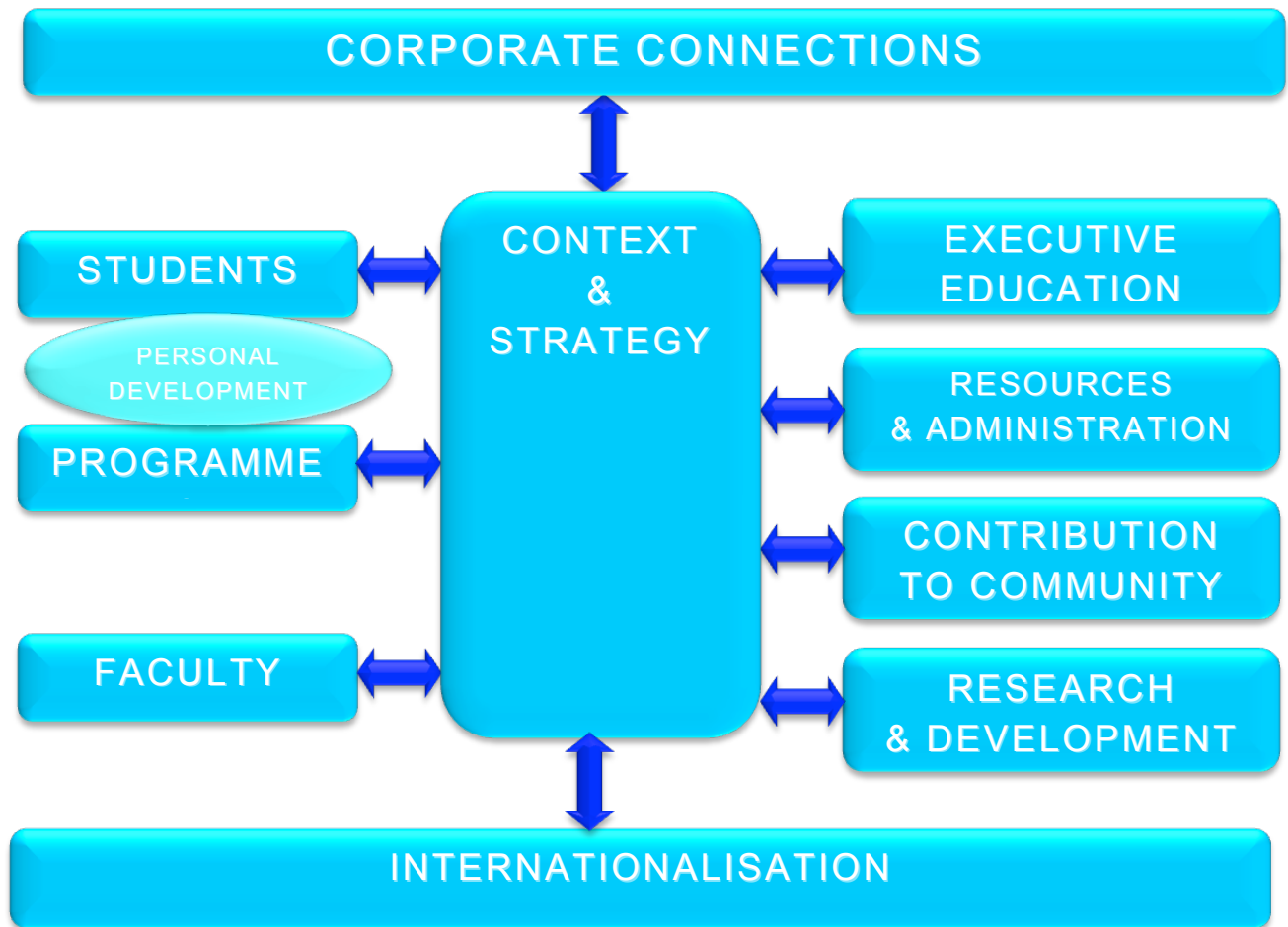
A truly international quality assessment scheme has to combine the need for commonly agreed standards with the need to respect the diversity of national systems. It has to consider the educational and cultural environment in which the School operates and relate it to the wider international context. This effectively rules out classical, single-context compliance schemes and necessitates a flexible approach. 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 an unusual 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.

¹ 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.

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***.



The EQUIS Criteria Framework.

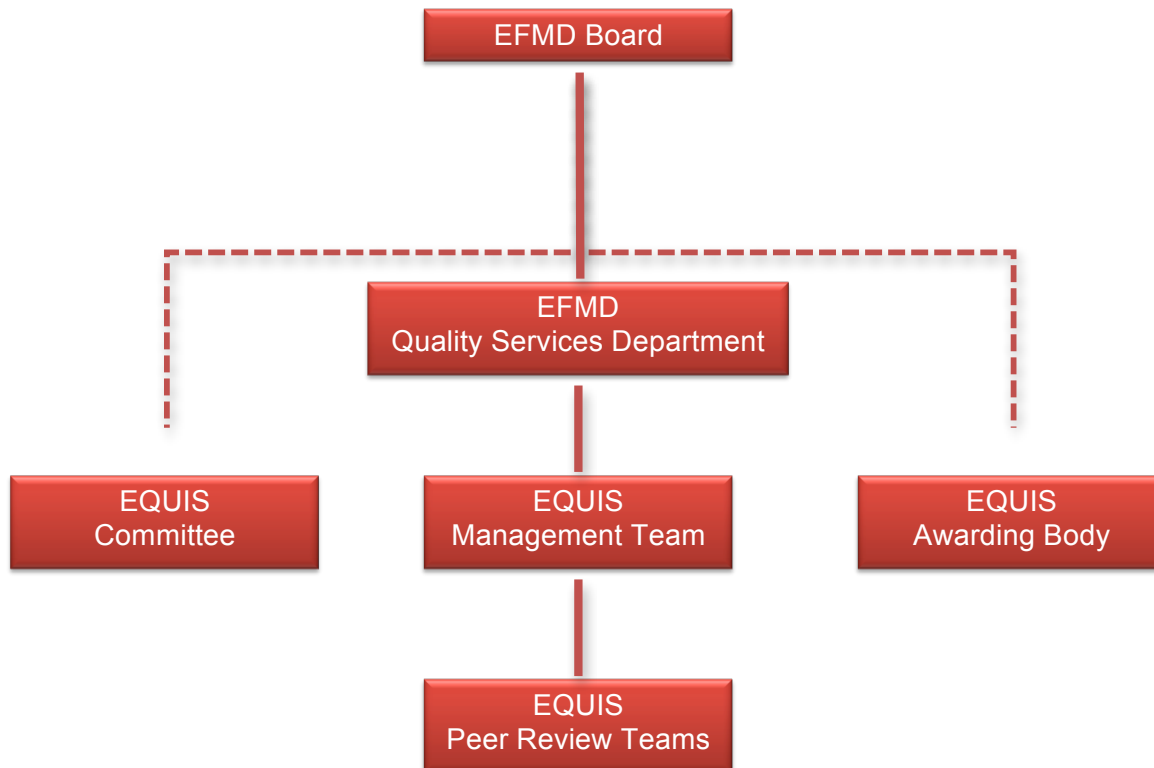
The principal features of the EQUIS process can be summarised as follows:

- 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 places a great emphasis on relevance to corporate concerns, 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 outcome-based perspectives and criteria.

- EQUIS is conceived as a learning process involving an international forum for defining the relevant quality criteria.
- EQUIS is dynamic and forward looking with a concern for developing innovative approaches to management education.

Section 2: MANAGEMENT OF EQUIS

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 Awarding Body based on the recommendations of the Peer Review Teams. Members of both the EQUIS Committee and the EQUIS Awarding Body are appointed by the Board of EFMD.



1. The EFMD Board

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

The EFMD Board appoints the members of the Awarding Body and the Committee.

The Board is also responsible for handling appeals through an established Appeals Procedure (see Annex 15 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes).

2. The Quality Services Department at EFMD

The Quality Services Department manages the EQUIS process and provides the administrative services for the system.

3. The EQUIS Committee

The EQUIS Committee, composed of academic and corporate representatives, 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 that are applying for EQUIS accreditation.

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 (www.efmd.org/index.php/accreditation-/equis/management-of-equis).

4. The EQUIS Awarding Body

The EQUIS Awarding Body 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 applying for EQUIS 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 Awarding Body meets at least three times a year at the request of the EQUIS Director. A detailed description of the Role and Functioning of the EQUIS Awarding Body and a current Members' list can be consulted on the EFMD website (www.efmd.org/index.php/accreditation-/equis/management-of-equis).

5. Peer Review Teams

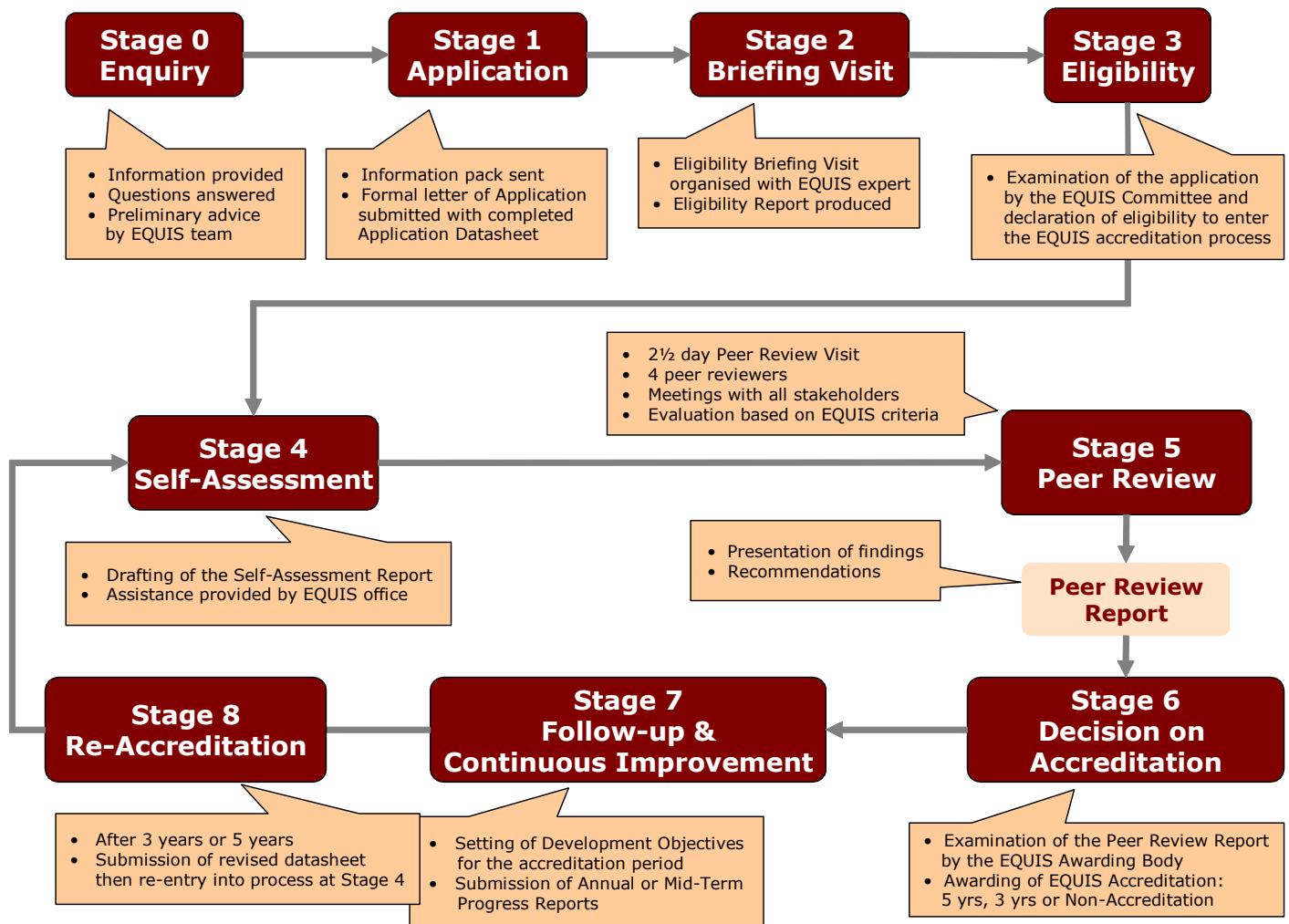
Each Peer Review Team is composed of four members with experience in the organisation and delivery of business and management programmes. They normally come from 4 different countries. Each team includes:

- The Chair of the Peer Review Team: normally 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 only applies to initial Peer Review visits.*
- Another academic representative (Dean or equivalent)
- A corporate representative or member of a professional association

All potential Peer Reviewers will be asked to confirm that there is no conflict of interest with the School concerned (Please refer to Annex 13 for the Conflict of Interest Policy). The School concerned should inform the EQUIS Office when it is aware of any conflict of interest for any of the proposed Peer Review Team members.

Section 3: THE EQUIS ACCREDITATION PROCESS

EQUIS Process Flowchart

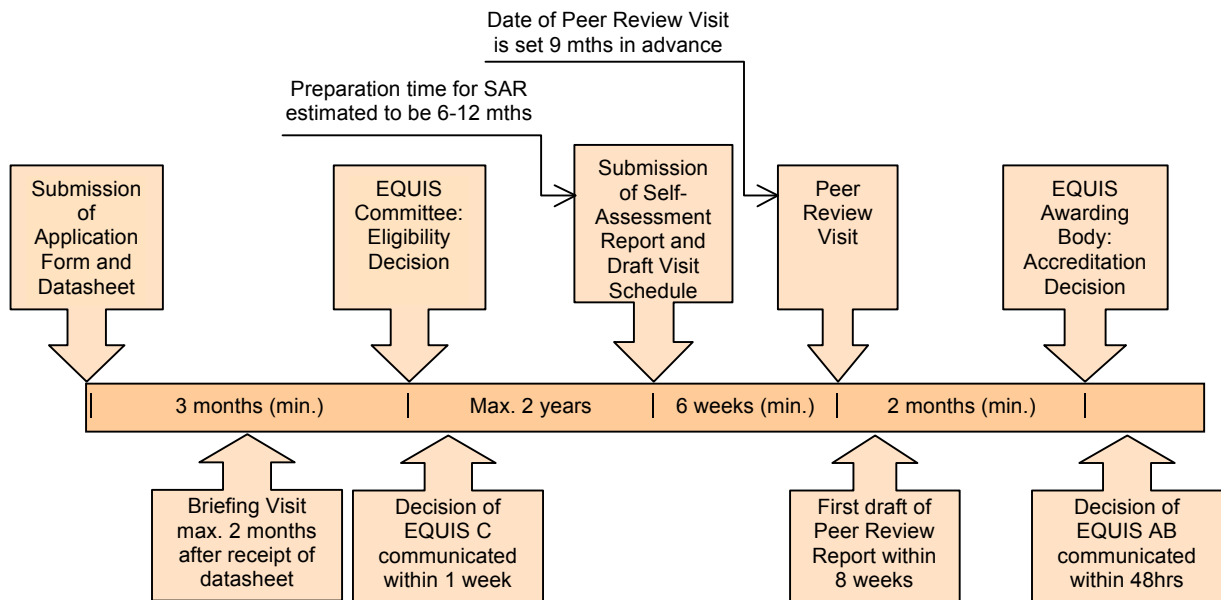


The main stages of the EQUIS accreditation process are the following:

EQUIS is a continuous process combining strategic institutional development, ongoing quality improvement and accreditation. Accreditation, in the most favourable circumstances, may be achieved within approximately one year of application if the initial Peer Review indicates that the School satisfies all the criteria.

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

EQUIS Key Timings



The EQUIS accreditation process is composed of several distinct stages:

Stage 0: Enquiry

This is the first contact between the School and EQUIS and precedes the formal application process. This Enquiry phase has proven to be extremely important and schools are recommended to undertake it before submitting the official application forms.

A representative of EQUIS informs the School about the EQUIS process and answers questions that it may have in this respect. The School will provide preliminary information 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.

On the basis of the information gathered, the EQUIS representative will advise the School on the likelihood of its being declared Eligible. If EQUIS is believed to be appropriate for the School, the EQUIS representative will encourage it to access the information on EQUIS available at the EFMD website (<http://www.efmd.org>), offer to send the School the standard introductory package of documents² about EQUIS accreditation, and encourage it to apply for Eligibility.

² Consisting of the EQUIS Standards & Criteria, the EQUIS Process Manual + Annexes and the Guidelines & Position Papers: Supporting Material for the EQUIS and EPAS Accreditation Systems

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 have been offered simply as advice. The School can still apply for Eligibility and the advice offered to the School at this stage will not be part of the information on which Eligibility will be based.

Stage 1: Formal Application

In order to formally enter the EQUIS process, the School must be a member of EFMD and remain a member during any period of accreditation

A School that wishes to enter the EQUIS accreditation process sends an Application Form (see Annex 1) to the EQUIS Director at EFMD and completes a Datasheet (see Annex 2) containing basic factual information about its programmes, activities and organisation. For procedural purposes, the Datasheet should also be provided to the EQUIS office in Word format.

The Datasheet is a short questionnaire that sets out basic 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 15 pages in length. The EQUIS office can provide assistance as required on filling in the Datasheet. 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 written publications sent to it as part of the standard EQUIS introductory package. Specifically, it is deemed to be familiar with the ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria***, the EQUIS Accreditation Process (as described in this manual), the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes and the EQUIS Fee Schedule.

Stage 2: Briefing Visit

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

This phase 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.

The Briefing Visit will be organised by the EQUIS Office as soon as possible and usually not later than two months after receipt of the finalised Datasheet. Whenever feasible, the Briefing session will take place by means of a half day visit to the School by an EQUIS expert. Under extraordinary circumstances, the Briefing session 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 for the EQUIS Committee with a recommendation regarding Eligibility.

For further details on the Briefing Visit and the format of the Briefing Visit Report, please refer to Section 4: Briefing Visit Guidelines.

A Briefing Visit may sometimes be suggested by the EQUIS Director to re-applying Schools (having failed to achieve accreditation previously) – see also page 20 of this Manual for guidance on re-applications after non-accreditation.

Stage 3: Eligibility

The EQUIS Committee is responsible for examining all applications and for taking decisions on Eligibility to enter the accreditation process based on the School's Datasheet and on the report and recommendation of the visiting expert.

The EQUIS Committee will declare a School Eligible to enter the EQUIS quality improvement and accreditation process if it is satisfied that the School meets the Eligibility criteria set out below:

The Eligibility Criteria

1. Institutional Scope

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 (note that membership of EFMD is open to schools outside of Europe). It must remain a member during the period of accreditation.

- b. is a degree awarding institution. Institutions whose primary focus is in non-degree executive education are not eligible, even if they are attached to a university or university faculty.
 - c. has a mission which is appropriate for a higher education institution.
 - d. has a primary focus on education for general management or business administration.
 - e. has reasonable autonomy in the management of its academic staff and budget and in the design and running of its programmes.
 - f. has clear boundaries which make it possible to distinguish it from other neighbouring units within the wider university structure.
 - g. has academic staff covering the principal management disciplines.
 - h. has graduated at least 3 classes in its main degree programme.
 - i. has been in operation for at least 10 years.
 - j. 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 (programmes, research, specialisations.....).
3. International Reputation
The School is recognised outside its own country.
4. Breadth of Activities
The School has reasonable breadth in its portfolio of activities as demonstrated by substantial presence in at least two of the principal programme segments (Bachelors, Masters, MBA, Ph.D, executive education).
5. Core Faculty
The School has a core faculty of at least 25 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. Small schools should explain how they meet the EQUIS criteria given their small size.
6. EQUIS Criteria
The School has a reasonable prospect of satisfying the EQUIS criteria within two years of being declared Eligible, particularly in the key areas of programme quality, faculty, research, corporate links and internationalisation.

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

Schools must continue to meet the eligibility criteria during the period of accreditation. They must report when they no longer meet these criteria and they may then lose their accreditation.

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 this Committee for Eligibility at the next available date if its Datasheet is received and approved by the EQUIS office not less than 3 months in advance of this date.

The EQUIS Office will present the School's Datasheet together with the Briefing Visit Report of the EQUIS expert to the EQUIS Committee for decision on Eligibility. The Committee will take the recommendation in the report into account, 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 to be assessed in greater depth during the Peer Review Visit.

The decision to declare a School "Eligible" will be accompanied by a 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 future accreditation.

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 in writing by the EQUIS Director within 1 week of the EQUIS Committee meeting.

Any School can present an Appeal against the decision on Eligibility of its own School. For details, see Annex 15 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes

After the Eligibility Decision

Being declared Eligible signifies that the School's application to enter the EQUIS process has been formally accepted and that EQUIS will work with the School towards the twin objectives of quality improvement and future accreditation. It is, therefore, free to advance to Stage 4 of the EQUIS process: Self-Assessment.

A School that is declared Eligible is expected to communicate its plans with respect to the rest of the EQUIS process within two months. 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 Awarding Body for the Accreditation decision.

A School that is declared Not Eligible cannot be reconsidered for Eligibility by the EQUIS Committee within 2 years of the initial decision.

Schools, re-applying to the EQUIS process 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. An on-site visit to the School by an EQUIS expert may be suggested by the EQUIS Director in order to complete the evidence to be provided to the EQUIS Committee. If more than 5 years have elapsed, a re-application will be treated as an initial application.

Stage 4: Self-Assessment

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

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 4 and 5).

The Report must be self-critical rather than promotional, and analytical as well as descriptive. The objective of the Self-Assessment and the accompanying report is to assist the EQUIS accreditation process, not simply to accumulate a mass of data. However, the information produced must be sufficient to allow an understanding of the School's situation and to support the work of the international review team.

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 between six months and a year. During this period, the School may request advice and assistance from the EQUIS Office in preparing its Self-Assessment Report.

The Self-Assessment Report should be between 100 and 150 pages in length and be printed double-sided. The report, together with annexes, the Student Report and updated Datasheet, should be sent to the EQUIS office in electronic copy only and to each of the four Peer Reviewers in hard copy (printed double-sided) and in electronic copy (either on CD-ROM or USB memory stick – not via e-mail). The postal addresses of the Peer Reviewers will be provided by the EQUIS Office.

The Self-Assessment Report should be submitted not less than six weeks before the date set for the Peer Review.

It is important to note that, should a Self-Assessment Report be considered inadequate as a preparation for the Peer Review, the visit may be postponed. In this situation, any additional costs incurred, for example in the rescheduling of Peer Reviewer flights, will be at the expense of the School.

A School may be asked to sign a consent form authorising EFMD to use the Self-Assessment Report for research purposes. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured in such cases.

Stage 5: Peer Review

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 has a certain idea about the time it will require to produce 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, usually soon after the Eligibility decision. 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 six weeks before the date on which the Peer Review Visit will start. The institution must also make sure that all its internal approval procedures and requirements are met before proposing a date. The

date of the Peer Review Visit will be negotiated between the School and the EQUIS office, since it often must take into account the availability of the potential members of the Peer Review Team. 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 institution 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 institution will be charged an EFMD administration fee (see fee schedule).

Three months before 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 the Guidance for Peer Review in Section 6 of this Process Manual. This schedule will be reviewed by the EQUIS office and changes to it may be proposed.

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. A visit to another School campus may be added when necessary. At the end of the Peer Review Visit, the Chair presents to the top management of the School the Peer Review Team's preliminary conclusions and recommendations for quality improvement during an oral feedback session. 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 regarding accreditation. This recommendation can be for 5-year accreditation, 3-year accreditation, or denial of accreditation.

The draft report with the recommendation will be sent to the School approximately 6 weeks after the Peer Review Visit for comment and confirmation of factual accuracy. All factual errors will then 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 fundamentally 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 Awarding Body, the School must give its formal authorisation to the EQUIS Office.

The final Peer Review Report is presented at the next EQUIS Awarding Body meeting, as long as this does not take place within 2 months of the Peer Review Visit.

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

Stage 6: Accreditation

With the formal agreement of the School, the Peer Review Report containing the recommendation of the Peer Review Team is submitted to the Awarding Body for the final decision on accreditation. The outcome can be 5-year Accreditation, 3-year Accreditation or Non-Accreditation. The decision will be communicated to the School within 48 hours of the meeting of the Awarding Body.

Any School can present an Appeal against the decision on accreditation of its own School. For details, see Annex 15 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes.

5-year Accreditation

Schools that, in the Awarding Body'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 room 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 these specified dimensions to make credible the achievement of accreditation for 5 years in due course. 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 receive 3-year Accreditation or will simply have its accreditation denied.

The letter communicating the Awarding Body decision to the School will indicate the Areas for Required Improvement that must be satisfied during the three-year period if EQUIS accreditation is to be maintained.

Non-Accreditation

Schools that, in the Awarding Body'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 Awarding Body to reject a School's accreditation.

Sometimes the Awarding Body may not follow a recommendation contained in a Peer Review Report for the following reasons:

- 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 7) and/or the recommendation regarding accreditation.
- The interpretation of the EQUIS standards by the Peer Review Team does not match that of the Awarding Body.

A School that has been denied accreditation (or has withdrawn before presentation to the EQUIS Awarding Body) loses its eligibility status and cannot be considered for re-acceptance into the EQUIS accreditation process by the EQUIS Committee within 2 years of the Awarding Body decision (or date of withdrawal).

Schools re-applying to the EQUIS process between 2 and 5 years failing to achieve accreditation, should provide a Progress Report, in addition to the Datasheet. This should show how the School has overcome the weaknesses outlined in the Awarding Body letter and indicate the progress it has made in implementing the recommendations in the Peer Review Report. An on-site visit to the School by an EQUIS expert may be suggested by the EQUIS Director in order to complete the evidence to be provided to the EQUIS Committee. If more than 5 years have elapsed, a re-application will be treated as an initial application.

Specific policies applying after accreditation

A School that is awarded EQUIS accreditation must abide by the EQUIS Communication Policy (see Annex 14).

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 16 in the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes for the detailed EQUIS Policy on major restructuring of a Business School.

Stage 7: 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, negotiated with the EQUIS Office in the case of 5-year accreditation or determined by the Awarding Body in the case of 3-year accreditation. The resulting Progress Reports are considered important documents in the re-accreditation process of the School.

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 major objectives to be pursued during this five year 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 will be based on the recommendations provided by the Peer Review Team in its Report. The School is free to 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 Progress Report to the EQUIS Office 30 months after accreditation by the Awarding Body. The report will describe clearly and succinctly the progress made on the achievement of the objectives selected by the School and approved by EQUIS. Therefore, while there is no template for the Progress Report, the following structure may be appropriate:

1. Strategic Developments within the school and/or the programme
2. Objective 1
3. Objective 2
4. Objective 3
5. Other developments

The report should be submitted by email to the EQUIS Office.

For Schools Accredited for a 3-year period

Any School receiving 3-year Accreditation will be required to submit a 5-10 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 Awarding Body). The report will describe clearly and succinctly the progress made on the Areas for Required Improvement established by the EQUIS Awarding Body (see above for guidance on the structuring of Progress Reports). The report should be submitted by email to the EQUIS Office. In Year 3 the School will need to apply for re-accreditation.

The achievements in the Progress Report will be evaluated by an EQUIS expert and his or her 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 Awarding Body to withdraw the accreditation in the next scheduled Awarding Body 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 goes through the re-accreditation process and form part of the documentation upon which the assessment is based. Peer Reviewers will also be informed of any delay or insufficiency in the progress reports.

Stage 8: 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 must apply for re-accreditation approximately one year before its accreditation expires. The expiry date coincides 3 or 5 years later with the date on which the EQUIS accreditation was granted by the Awarding Body.

At the beginning of the 3rd or the 5th year, the EQUIS office will remind the School about the expiry of its accreditation and the procedures described here for the renewal of accreditation. The School then sends an Application Form to the EQUIS Director, accompanied by an updated Datasheet.

Schools applying for re-accreditation are subject to the same fees as schools undergoing their first accreditation. (Please consult the latest Fee Schedule on www.efmd.org/equis.)

The process is substantially the same as for initial accreditation except that the School does not have to undergo a Briefing Visit. 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. This will be followed by a full two and a half day Peer Review Visit by a team of four reviewers. The Awarding Body 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 made.

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 Awarding Body for maintenance of accreditation. Reference should be made to the two annual progress reports that the School has submitted in the years since the previous Peer Review.

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 corporate world and the visit itself will last two and a half working days. As opposed to an initial accreditation, it may not be required that one of the Peer Reviewers be from the local environment.

The schedule of the visit will also 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 may require 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 improvement specified by the Awarding Body.

Re-accreditation decisions

EFMD Accreditations are demanding systems, first, by design since they target very good schools and programmes. Second, in order to provide a differentially valuable and challenging incentive for achieving, maintaining and improving high quality. As a consequence, sporadically schools or programmes are denied accreditation. Such decisions can be especially harmful to schools and programmes already accredited. 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 be instantly removed from the list of accredited schools or programmes.
- 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 and programmes 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 or programmes only 6 months after the date of the Awarding Body or Accreditation Board (AB) meeting to which the Report would have otherwise been submitted.
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 or Programme 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 3 months of the AB date) if it will accept the non-accreditation or if it will aim for another full Peer Review Visit (PRV) to take place within 1 year of the AB decision date. This PRV 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 PRV should not be interpreted as recognition that the previous PRT, the AB 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 PRV. 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 PRT persuasively convey the quality of the School or Programme according to the established quality framework. The School should therefore pay particular attention to the recommendations made in the previous PRR and in the AB letter. Both of these will be part of the documentation provided to the new PRT.
5. No Application Fee (see Fees 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/Programme will be removed from the accredited list (allowing the 6 months grace from the date of the AB as indicated below).
6. If the School opts for the new review, it will remain in the list until the AB makes a decision on the second PRR. A negative decision at that time will be final, i.e. it will not be allowed a further deferral period and the School will be removed immediately from the list of accredited schools/programmes.
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/programmes for a total of 6 months after the AB decision date.

Section 4: BRIEFING VISIT GUIDELINES

This section is aimed primarily at those undertaking the role of EQUIS Expert in a Briefing Visit but will also be of interest to Schools seeking accreditation.

The on-site Briefing Visit is an important part of the Eligibility process, scheduled shortly after receipt of the School's application for EQUIS accreditation. 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 determine whether the School satisfies the Eligibility criteria (see Section 3, stage 3 - Eligibility Criteria - of this Manual).
- To conduct a pre-evaluation of the School in order to identify possible concerns or major obstacles to future 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 discuss the programme portfolio so that the visiting expert may make an informed recommendation on the second 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 inform the School about the potential outcomes of an Eligibility decision and the possible courses of action following each.
- 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 one- or two-page Briefing Visit report to the EQUIS Committee formulating a recommendation on Eligibility.

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 Awarding Body 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. Preparation of the report to the EQUIS Committee

The second objective of the visit is for the EQUIS expert to make a recommendation to the EQUIS Committee regarding the Eligibility of the School. The report should, therefore, indicate obvious shortcomings, potential problems and major risks that may make accreditation unlikely or uncertain. If the visiting expert feels that the School should not be declared Eligible, this should be clearly stated.

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 before the meeting of the EQUIS Committee. This is particularly important because the Datasheet is the principal source of factual information upon which the EQUIS Committee will base its judgement.

In the discussions that this part of the visit schedule will generate, the EQUIS expert may often find that he or she is 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, two or three pages at most. The template on the following page provides a framework for drafting the report.

4. Organisation of the visit

The visit is organised to last for at least a half day. The School should liaise with the EQUIS office and will be asked to submit a proposed schedule of meetings. This will typically involve the School's Dean or Director, the EQUIS co-ordinator within the School, and the School's Executive Committee.

If the School so desires, a general question-and-answer information session may also be organised in open forum for members of the School's staff.

A typical briefing visit schedule would be as follows:

1. Introductory session open to all members of the School (1 hour and 10 minutes)

The visiting expert sets out the objectives of the visit and begins with a brief introduction to EFMD and Quality Services (10 minutes).

This is followed by a general presentation of the EQUIS process (45 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 (Executive Committee, etc.) and a small number of other participants directly involved in the process.

3. Process Briefing (1 hour)

The visiting expert makes sure that the School has understood the EQUIS process and answers all questions that arise. A minimum of 5-10 minutes of this time should be devoted to ensuring that the expectations with respect to the Self-Assessment Report are fully understood.

5. Template for the Briefing Visit Report
(for completion by the EQUIS Expert)

Briefing Visit Report
Name of the School
Name of the Visiting EQUIS Expert
Date of the Visit

A. Meeting Schedule for the Visit.

Please include the names and titles of the participants

B. Remarks concerning the School that may complete or facilitate the comprehension of the Datasheet.

C. Are there any apparent problems of governance?

D. Satisfaction of the Eligibility Criteria:

1. Institutional Scope
2. Excellent National Standing
3. International Reputation
4. Breadth of Activities
5. Core Faculty
6. EQUIS Accreditation Criteria

E. Recommendation:

- for Eligibility. What are the principal risks?

- Programme selected for more in-depth assessment:

Section 5: GUIDANCE FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

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 an international centre for management education. Within an international context, the School should be seeking answers to some very simple 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

1.2 Carry out a comprehensive strategic review.

The assessment linked to the Peer Review should provide a review of the strategy process within the School. It should:

- evaluate the overall clarity of the strategic objectives
- lead to a better understanding of the market
- help the School achieve a balance between ambition and realism
- lead to 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 forms the basis for the Peer Review process. 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. The members of the Peer Review Team must receive the Self-Assessment Report at least 6 weeks before the date 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 a 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 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*

In order to complete the Self-Assessment process within the required time frame, a detailed plan will need to be developed within the first month following the EQUIS Eligibility decision.

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 review should result in a balanced statement of current strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats and a determination of the action needed to address these issues. The review team should not in any way restrict itself to the EQUIS criteria or 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 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 fully understood by the Peer Review Team so that its assessment can take into account the constraints and specific quality expectations of the local environment.

The EQUIS team 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. Contribution to the Community
8. Resources and Administration
9. Internationalisation
10. Corporate Connections

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.

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. Cover Letter

The Self-Assessment Report should be accompanied by a cover letter detailing the name of the individual to contact in case of questions related to the report.

3.2. Main Report

The Self-Assessment Report should lead to a conclusion in which the School makes a case for EQUIS accreditation. This Self-Assessment Report should in no way be presented or used as a promotional document. It should instead, alongside its role in the EQUIS accreditation process, serve as a useful internal reference document.

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

The report should be between 100 and 150 pages long, excluding annexes and supporting documents.

3.2.1 Cover page

The cover of the Self-Assessment Report should clearly state the full name of the School and the date of submission to the EQUIS office.

3.2.2 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.

3.2.3 Executive Summary

An Executive Summary should be included at the beginning of the report.

3.2.4 Main Content

The format for the Self-Assessment Report should follow that of the ten chapters of the **EQUIS Standards and Criteria** document. Only in exceptional cases should the report be structured in a different way.

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 each question. 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.

3.3. 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 4 and 5 to this Manual.

Bulky documents and non-essential material should be placed in the base room for consultation during the review.

3.4. Student Report

The Self-Assessment Report should be accompanied by a brief report compiled by a representative group of students. A template has been provided (see Annex 6), 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.

3.5. Updated Datasheet

The submission should also include an updated version of the Datasheet in hard copy and in Word format, ensuring that the information is accurate at the time of the Peer Review Visit.

3.6. Distribution of the Self-Assessment Report

The Self-Assessment Report and accompanying documents (Annexes, Student Report and Datasheet) should be sent to the EQUIS office in electronic copy only and to each of the four Peer Reviewers in hard copy (printed double-sided) and in electronic copy (either on CD-ROM or USB memory stick – not via e-mail) at least 6 weeks before the date of the Peer Review Visit. The postal addresses of the Peer Reviewers will be provided by the EQUIS Office.

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

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 come from 4 different countries. Each team includes:

- The Chair of the Peer Review Team: normally 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 only applies to initial Peer Review visits.*
- Another academic representative (Dean or equivalent).
- A corporate representative or member of a professional association.

The School to be reviewed will always have the opportunity to veto a proposed member of the team for reasons of conflict of interest, for example if he or she is from an institution that is a close competitor or if he or she is felt to be unsuitable for some other reason. Particular care is taken over the selection of the “local” reviewer and the School will be consulted on the choice before a person is invited to participate in the review. The School concerned should inform the EQUIS Office when it is aware of any conflict of interest for any of the proposed PRT 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, as well as the Chair, 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 13). Prior to participation in a review, each reviewer will have signed a general confidentiality agreement with respect to the information provided to them in the context of the review.

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 to the Awarding Body concerning accreditation. 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.

This is no easy task. The balance between the role of the Peer Review process in providing sufficient information to the Awarding Body 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

- The allocation of a trustworthy and credible Peer Review Team to the School.
- Thorough preparation by the School through the production of a Self-Assessment Report.
- Careful reading of the Self-Assessment Report by the Peer Review Team.
- 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 Awarding Body 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 are sent to each member of the Peer Review Team:

General Documents:

1. Names and addresses of the members of the 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 (sent by the School directly to the Reviewer)
N.B. This includes an updated datasheet (see Annex 2)
6. Eligibility Letter, highlighting any health warnings that the EQUIS Committee felt appropriate to the application

In the case of initial accreditation visits:

7. Datasheet, summarising the 'facts and figures' of the School at the time of the eligibility decision

In the case of re-accreditation visits:

8. The report of the Peer Review Team from the previous Peer Review Visit, as presented to the Awarding Body
9. The letter setting out the Awarding Body decision
10. The Progress Report(s) of the School from the previous accreditation period, as well as the feedback of the EQUIS expert

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

The School will send copies of the completed Self-Assessment Report (including annexes, Student Report and Datasheet) to the members of the Peer Review Team at least 6 weeks before the start of the Peer Review Visit.

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 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 further investigate these initial findings and consequently to confirm or refute them.

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.

2.3. Logistics

The School is expected to make all necessary arrangements for accommodation and the local transport for the experts. 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 international travel according to the general guideline that flights should be booked in economy class unless the total flight time exceeds 5 hours, in which case business class is acceptable. 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 should the price be higher than specified in the fee schedule, copying the EQUIS Office. Travel expenses should be claimed to the School, copying additionally the EQUIS Office.

Hotel accommodation should be of a standard suitable for someone of the level of Dean and should be reasonably close to the School. Unless exceptional circumstances exist (for example infrequent flights), schools should expect to cover the costs of 3 nights hotel accommodation for Peer Reviewers travelling for under 5 hours and 5 nights for those travelling for longer than 5 hours. In the later 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.

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

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 written into the proceedings are to be avoided. The exception to this is that a dinner may be arranged at the end of the first day of meetings. This is explained in more detail in paragraph 3.1d.

Table name plates should be prepared for 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 be charged a fee to cover the administrative expenses for 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. If necessary, this will be arranged separately by the EQUIS Office.

3. Setting up the Schedule

The School being visited will be asked to submit to the EQUIS office a proposed schedule for the visit at least 3 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. It is important that the Head of School (Dean/CEO/President/Director) be present on the first morning of the visit (09:00-11:00) and the last morning of the visit (11:00 – 13:00). The EQUIS Office will co-ordinate the finalisation of the schedule with the School and, if necessary, with the Chair of the Peer Review Team at least 2 weeks before the visit.

The School will have plenty of opportunity to discuss the arrangements and requirements for the Peer Review with the EQUIS Office prior to the visit. Nonetheless the following guidance notes should assist the teams in their planning.

3.1. *General structure of the visit*

The visit by the Peer Review Team to the School will begin at 9:00 a.m. on the first day and end no later than 14:00 p.m. on the third day. The schedule for the first two days should not extend beyond 18:00 p.m.

Guidance on the detailed visit schedule is given in the following section. However, the following items deserve a special mention:

3.1.1 The initial Briefing Meeting with the Team

The work of the Peer Review Team will normally begin with a Briefing 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 20:00 p.m., is to allow:

- briefing of the Peer Review Team by the Chair
- agreement on the working methods and allocation of responsibilities within the Peer Review Team. For example, the Chair will normally delegate the chairmanship role to his fellow team members for some meetings
- review of the Self-Assessment Report and identification of the key issues
- review of the visit schedule and preparation of the next day's meetings
- identification of any supplementary information to be requested

The School will be required to book a suitable place for this meeting, preferably a separate meeting room in the hotel. It is also important that the team can continue to work undisturbed through dinner, either in the same meeting room or at a quiet table in the hotel restaurant.

3.1.2 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. It is important that sufficient time (no less than 1½ hours) be allowed for this session in order to maximise the effectiveness of subsequent meetings.

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. 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.

3.1.3 Final Team Meeting

The team will meet before, during and after the dinner at the end of the second day of interviews to formulate its assessment and recommendation for accreditation.

3.1.4 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.

3.1.5 Entertaining the Peer Review Team

There is no obligation for the School to entertain the Peer Review Team during their visit and the decision to do so (or not) will not influence the outcome of the review. However, should they wish to organise a social event during their visit, this can be scheduled on the evening of the first day of the visit. Some schools find that this is a good opportunity to introduce the members of the Peer Review Team to the School's external partners, corporate members or to meet the members of the Executive Committee in a more relaxed environment.

3.2. Detailed visit schedule

The visit should be scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to no later than 18:15 p.m. on days 1 and 2, and from 9:00 a.m. to no later than 14:00 p.m. on Day 3. The Peer Review Team should be allowed sufficient time alone throughout each day to debrief themselves after a series of meetings and to prepare for the next round. It must be remembered that the team also needs time to read the material in the Base Room.

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

As a general principle the Peer Review Team only expects to see individuals once only unless they have more than one functional role. The sessions should not include too many participants to allow for meaningful discussions.

The visit schedule should include sessions on the following topics and the meetings are normally scheduled in the order as indicated below:

INITIAL PEER REVIEW VISITS

Day 0:

19:30 Dinner at hotel in private room for the Peer Review Team alone to set the visit agenda

Day 1:

09:00-10:30 **Initial meeting with the School's Executive Committee** – see above 1,½hours

10:30-10:45 **Break**

10:45-11:45 **External Governance** - representatives of the School's Governing Body, including for example members of the University leadership or Board of Trustees. 1 hour

N.B. These should not be the same people as for the initial meeting .

11:45-13:00 **The Overall Programme Portfolio)** 1,¼ hours
Associate Dean(s) responsible for overall portfolio and Programme Directors

13:00-14:00 **Lunch** – Peer Review Team alone for discussions

14:00-15:00	Faculty Management - Dean of the Faculty or those responsible for faculty management	1 hour
15:00-16:00	Research – Associate Dean / Director for Research, members of the Research Committee	1 hour
16:00-16:15	Break	
16:15-17:15	Subject specialisms - Department or subject area heads.	1 hour* <i>-2 groups in parallel if more than 3 participants</i>
17:15-18:15	Executive Education - Director of Executive Education programmes and support staff	1 hour
19:30-22:30	Dinner (this may be the occasion for a social event)	
 <u>Day 2:</u>		
09:00-10:30	Selected Programme – Programme Director(s) and Administrators responsible for the programme	1½ hours
10:30-12:00	Review of Programme Materials	1½ hours Reading time for the PR Team
12:00-13:00	Students: 2 groups in parallel - from different programmes, to be scheduled in related programme groups. These groups should include students from the Selected Programme and students who contributed to the Student Report.	1 hour* <i>-2 groups of 10-15 students</i>
13:00-14:00	Lunch – Peer Review Team alone for discussions	
14:00-15:00	Faculty: 2 groups in parallel – Randomly selected faculty members. These should be different from the senior staff already met.	1 hour* <i>-2 groups of 8-10 faculty members</i>
15:00-16:00	Support services: 2 groups in parallel - representatives of student services, admissions, marketing, internships, international office, and careers	1 hour* <i>-2 or more groups in parallel</i>
16:00-16:15	Break	
16:15-17:15	Corporate Connections – Representatives of key corporate partners and clients, advisory boards, etc	1 hour

In some cases, the School may prefer to organise this meeting in the form of a dinner at the end of Day 1

17:15-18:00	Alumni - Representatives of the Alumni network	45 minutes* <i>-2 groups in parallel</i>
19:30	Dinner (when the Peer Review Team meets separately to formulate its overall assessment)	

Day 3

09:00-10:00	Group 1: Resourcing – facilities, budget, funding Group 2: Financial Management	1 hour <i>2 groups in parallel</i>
10:00-10:45	Site visit: lecture halls, working group rooms, libraries etc.	45 minutes max*
10:45-12:15	Peer Review Team meets separately	1½ hours
12:15-13:00	Debriefing and feedback to the School by the Peer Review Team	45 minutes
13:00-14:00	Optional Lunch	1 hour

* - Peer Review Team can be split into 2 sub-teams

Deviations from the above template may be proposed by the School to take into account its specific circumstances or in cases of exceptional scheduling difficulties. In all cases, the School should first propose a schedule to be reviewed and agreed by the EQUIS Office.

RE-ACCREDITATION PEER REVIEW VISITS

Day 0:

19:30 Dinner at hotel in private room for the Peer Review Team alone to set the visit agenda

To take place on Day 1:

09:00-10:30	Initial meeting with the School's Executive Committee – see above	1½ hours
10:30-10:45	Break	
10:45-11:45	External Governance - representatives of the School's Governing Body, including for example members of the University leadership or Board of Trustees. N.B. These should not be the same people as for the initial meeting .	1 hour
11:45-13:00	The Overall Programme Portfolio) Associate Dean(s) responsible for overall portfolio and Programme Directors	1,¼ hours
13:00-14:00	Lunch – Peer Review Team alone for discussions	
14:00-15:00	Faculty Management - Dean of the Faculty or those responsible for faculty management	1 hour
15:00-16:00	Research – Associate Dean / Director for Research, members of the Research Committee	1 hour
16:00-16:15	Break	
16:15-17:15	Development Objectives – with the School's Executive Committee. For Schools previously granted 5-yr accreditation: review of the 3 development objectives For Schools previously granted 3-yr accreditation: review of progress made in relation to the areas of concern	1 hour
19:30-22:30	Dinner (this may be the occasion for a social event)	

Day 2:

09:00-10:30	Selected Programme – Programme Director(s) and Administrators responsible for the programme	1½ hours
10:30-10:45	Break	
10:45-12:15	Review of Programme Materials	1½ hours Reading time for the PR Team
12:15-13:15	Light lunch – Peer Review Team alone for discussions	
13:15-14:15	Students: 2 groups in parallel- from different programmes, to be scheduled in related programme groups. These groups should include students from the Selected Programme and students who contributed to the Student Report.	1 hour* <i>-2 groups of 10-15 students</i>
14:15-15:15	Faculty: 2 groups in parallel - A random group of faculty members. These should be different from the senior staff already met.	1 hour* <i>-2 groups of 8-10 faculty members</i>
15:15-15:45	Break	
15:45-16:45	Executive Education – Director of Executive Education programmes and support staff	1 hour
16:45-17:45	Corporate connections - representatives of key corporate customers, advisory boards, etc. In some cases, the School may prefer to organise this meeting in the form of a dinner at the end of Day 1	1 hour
	<i>Optional parallel session with Representatives of the Alumni Network</i>	
19:30	Dinner (when the Peer Review Team meets separately to formulate its overall assessment)	

Day 3:

09:00-09:45	Group 1: Resourcing – facilities, budget, funding Group 2: Financial Management	1 hour <i>2 groups in parallel</i>
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09:45-10:15	Site Visit	30 minutes
10:15-11:45	Peer Review Team meets separately	1½ hours
11:45-12:30	Debriefing and feedback to the School by the Peer Review Team	45 minutes
12:30-13:30	Optional Lunch	1 hour

* - Peer Review Team can be split into 2 sub-teams

Deviations from the above template may be proposed by the School to take into account its specific circumstances or in cases of exceptional scheduling difficulties. In all cases, the School should first propose a schedule, to be reviewed and agreed by the EQUIS Office.

4. The 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 accepted. Exceptionally video conferences could be allowed with the approval of the EQUIS Office.

4.1.1 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.
- The team should consider the possibility of asking for additional information from the School to facilitate their evaluation. The conduct of the interviews should be pre-determined by this identified shortfall.
- Throughout the interviews, individual team members should be working towards the overall assessment and need to crosscheck facts and complete adequate documentation. This will make their work much easier when summarising their findings and writing the final report. The EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form (see Annex 8) is intended to serve as a tool for this purpose. Several copies of this document per Peer Reviewer may be helpful.

4.1.2 Interviews with the students

Students are a very rich source of information, but their comments need to be verified against the information given by faculty members. Interviews with students provide an important insight into workload, the professionalism of staff, 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. A suitable size for groups of students is between ten and fifteen within a particular programme. The group should be representative of the whole student population within a particular programme. Students from very different programmes should not be mixed. The groups should at least contain students from the 2 programmes chosen for more in-depth assessment.

4.1.3 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.

4.1.4 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 1 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 original Datasheet. This selection will be made by the EQUIS Committee at the time of the eligibility decision.

The interview listed under Overall Programme Portfolio will normally be with senior staff 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.

The interviews with students in two parallel groups will be with a representative sample of students including students from the selected programme.

For the selected programme, the documents listed below should be made available in the Base Room, either in hard copy or electronically (where highlighted, preferably in English). See also Annex 5 of the EQUIS Process Manual Annexes – Information & Documents to be provided in the Base Room.

- Documents setting out the rationale and structure of the programme including overall objectives and Intended Learning Outcomes

- Details of each course in the programme including Intended Learning Outcomes and syllabi
- **Descriptions of the assessment regime and grading system**
- Access to online material regarding course organization and delivery.
- Teaching evaluations (summary) by students for each course, such that the highest (H), middle (M) and lowest (L) rated courses can be identified in each programme year and can be also split between core (mandatory) and elective courses.
- Teaching materials and student work: Courses should be selected for sampling based on teaching evaluations according to the table below. Where possible, **at least half the courses should be in English.**

3- or 4-year Undergraduate Programmes	1- or 2-year Graduate Programmes
1 st year: 3 core courses with H, M, L teaching evaluations	3 core courses with H, M and L teaching evaluations
2 nd year: 2 core courses with H and L and 1 elective course with L teaching evaluations	3 electives with H, M and L teaching evaluations.
Final year: 1 core course with L and 2 electives with H and L teaching evaluations	

For programmes or years without electives, electives should be replaced by more core courses at equivalent H, M & L levels.

Teaching materials should be provided for each of the selected courses to include the course notes or handouts, case studies, text books, journal readings.

Student work should be sampled based on mark or grade schedules or distributions (list of student names with marks or grades) within the selected courses. Note that mark schedules must be provided for each of the selected courses. For each of the same 9 UG or 6 PG courses selected above, the following student work should be provided:

- the assignments/exams set
- a sample of 6 graded/marked student scripts matching those assignments/exams. These 6 scripts should include the highest mark, the lowest mark and 4 from close to the pass mark for the course (ie marginal

scripts). If there are no failed papers, the sample should consist of the 2 highest and the 4 lowest marks or grades.

A sample of 12 graded final dissertations or internship reports (as appropriate, e.g. Masters theses or first degree “stage” reports) should also be provided, with 3 each at H and at L level and 6 at M level.

4.2. The Base Room

The School should make available a Base Room for the duration of the visit, which should normally serve as the main committee room used for meetings. The room provided for the team 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

All documents for the visit, e.g. the faculty management handbook, course documents, examples of students’ work, case studies, research output, brochures etc. should be laid out in this base room. 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 5 to this Manual). The Base Room should also include the programme materials as specified in section 4.1.4 above. Nearly two hours are allocated on the second day for evaluating these materials.

4.3. 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 debriefing sessions throughout the visit. These meetings are also necessary to check that the Peer Review Team is on track for a complete coverage of all the EQUIS standards and is working steadily towards the final assessment.

5. 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 8). 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 Awarding Body.

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 (Annexes 7 and 8).
2. Consolidation of findings in the final team debriefing meeting(s)
 - Consolidation of the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form
 - Agreement on the EQUIS Quality Profile scoring
 - 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.

5.1. Individual assessment and completion of documents

This will be an ongoing 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.

5.2. 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 organisations and individual Chairs, but experience teaches us that the use of a rigorous procedure for collecting perceptions and arriving at a consensus avoids the undesirable effects of disagreement in the team.

Each of the key topics should not only be treated in a qualitative way, but also in a more quantitative, comparative way. This is the role of the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet, which not only helps the team to arrive at an objective assessment, but also fulfils the School's need for feedback on their relative positioning in the international community.

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.

5.2.1 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 8) 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
1.1	Environment	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding by the School of the environment in which it operates Legitimacy within the national environment 	
1.2	Institutional status	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity of the School's legal and institutional status 	

Section of the EQUIS Criteria Evaluation Form.

5.2.2 The EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet

The EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet (see Annex 7) 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
Chap 1	Context, Governance and Strategy				
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 a model of excellence.
- **Below Standard**
The School is judged to be below the threshold of the EQUIS standard in this area.
- **N/A**
Not considered applicable and/or relevant to the School concerned.

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 final, consolidated version of the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet has been agreed, it will no longer 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 Awarding Body.

5.2.3 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 is not in a position to base its judgement upon comparison with other institutions, nor is it expected to do so. On the other hand, its judgement must be based firmly on the definition of EQUIS standards as set out in the document entitled ***EQUIS Standards and Criteria***.

5.2.4 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.

5.3. 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 panels 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 Awarding Body. 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.

6. The EQUIS Peer Review Report

The report is the culmination of the assessment process and is an extremely important document not only for the Awarding Body but also for the School's

management team. Although the report will not normally be made public, it 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.

6.1. 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
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 within 6 weeks after the Peer Review Visit.
5. The revised version which includes the Peer Review Team's recommendation on accreditation is formatted and proofread by the EQUIS Office and submitted to the School
6. The School responds to any factual inconsistencies or misunderstandings and returns it to the EQUIS Office.
7. Following receipt of comments from the School, changes may be made and the final report will be completed by the Chair in collaboration with the EQUIS Office (Normally the final version will be sent to the School within 8 weeks from the date of the Peer Review Visit)
8. This final version is sent to the School which is requested to give its written authorisation for the report to be submitted to the Awarding Body.
9. Once this authorisation has been obtained, the final report is submitted to the Awarding Body together with the EQUIS Quality Profile Sheet and the most recent Datasheet.
10. The Peer Review Team members receive the final version of the Peer Review Report after the Accreditation decision.

6.2. 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.

6.3. Recommended Format

Length: 10-15 pages

Title Page

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 Background

- background on the visit: initial or re-accreditation, delay, Eligibility warnings, etc
- recommendations and suggestions in previous report

1.3 Institutional Scope

- institutional focus of the accreditation: limitations and exclusions

1.4 Acknowledgements

- comment on Self-Assessment Report
- organisation of the visit and flexibility of the School
- acknowledgements
- any general comments on the visit

2. General Assessment

Executive summary of the report (1-2 pages)

3. Recommendation to the Awarding Body

- for a period of 5 years, indicating areas of excellence;
- for a period of 3 years, describing the areas of 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

- 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

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1. *Responsibilities of the EQUIS Team in EFMD*

- 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 (usually at least 6 weeks)
- 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 Awarding Body
- 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

7.2. *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 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.
- 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 (see Annex 9) and return it on-line to the Quality Assurance Committee at EFMD

N.B. Communication with the Peer Review Team by the School should always be via the EQUIS Office or with the EQUIS Office in copy.

7.3. 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 assessment visit before 20.00 p.m. 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 they disagree with the decisions arrived at by the team, they must nonetheless abide by that consensus
- 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 (see Annex 10) 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 person outside the Peer Review Team and the EFMD EQUIS team

7.4. Responsibilities of the Chair of the Peer Review Team

Before the visit

- to check at least 6 weeks in advance of the Peer Review Visit if the Self-Assessment Report is adequate

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

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 Awarding Body
- to complete an EQUIS Process Evaluation Form for Peer Reviewers (see Annex 10) and return it on-line to the EQUIS office

7.5. Role of Corporate Reviewers

The corporate 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 Corporate Connections (Chapter 10) and Executive Education (Chapter 6). This corporate 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. Corporate presence is also seen as an essential feature of the EQUIS accreditation process, through representation on the EQUIS Committee, Awarding Body and the participation of corporate Peer Reviewers in the Peer Review Teams.

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

7.5. Role of Local Reviewers

The Local Reviewer is familiar with the local educational environment and can 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 and is selected in agreement with the school under review. This is valid for reviews for initial accreditation only.

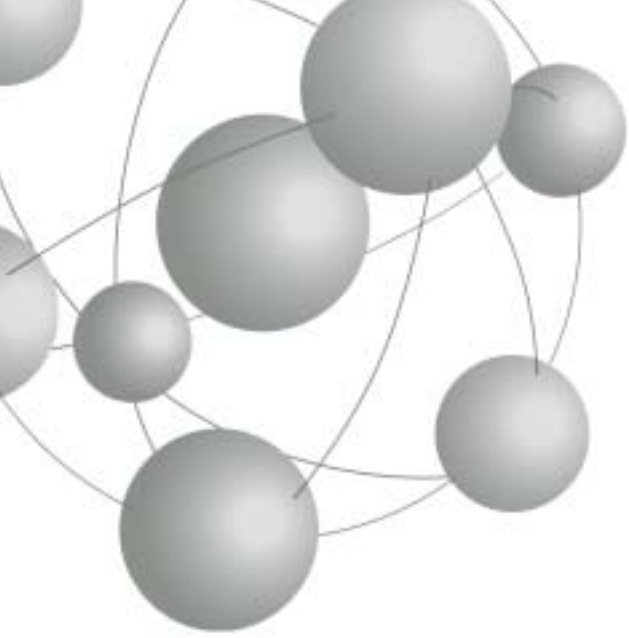
Further Information and Contacts

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:

<http://www.efmd.org/EQUIS>

Alternatively you can contact the EFMD Quality Services Office:

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