Online Course Certification System
An international quality benchmark for online courses

2019 EOCCS PROCESS MANUAL
The EOCCS documents are revised periodically and it is the responsibility of the Institution to always use the latest version of the documents. Older versions of the EOCCS documents are only acceptable by prior approval from the EOCCS Office. The periodical changes to the documents are always published on the EFMD Global Network website at the beginning of each year.
## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSAR</td>
<td>Course Self-Assessment Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>EOCCS Certification Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEG</td>
<td>Criteria Evaluation Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Datasheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDAF</td>
<td>EFMD Deans Across Frontiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOCCS</td>
<td>EFMD Global Network Online Course Certification System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPAS</td>
<td>EFMD Programme Accreditation System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUIS</td>
<td>EFMD Quality Improvement System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR</td>
<td>Review Panel Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Review Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QP</td>
<td>Quality Profile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to EOCCS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>EOCCS - EFMD Global Network Online Course Certification System</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Benefits of the EOCCS Certification Process</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Scope of EOCCS Certification</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1</td>
<td>Course Scope</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.2</td>
<td>Differentiation from other accreditation systems</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Management of EOCCS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The EFMD Board</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>The Quality Services Department at EFMD</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>The EOCCS Certification Board</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Peer Review Panel</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The EOCCS Certification Process</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 0</td>
<td>Enquiry</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>EOCCS Application Form</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Re-Certification</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Certification Guidelines</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>EOCCS Certification Criteria</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Guidance for Course Self-Assessment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>The Purpose of Course Self-Assessment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>The Course Self-Assessment Process</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>The Course Self-Assessment Report</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Guidance for Review Panel</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.1</td>
<td>Composition of the Review Panel</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2</td>
<td>Objectives of the Review Panel within the EOCCS process</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Preparation for the Review</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1</td>
<td>Study of the Course Self-Assessment Report by the Peer Reviewers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Review Panel Meeting</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.1</td>
<td>Briefing meeting of the Review Panel</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.2</td>
<td>The EOCCS Quality Profile and Criteria Evaluation Guide</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Review Panel Decision Making Process and Feedback</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Review Panel Report</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5.1</td>
<td>Formulating the Report</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5.2</td>
<td>Procedure for the Review Panel</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.1</td>
<td>Responsibilities of the EOCCS Team at EFMD Global Network</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.2</td>
<td>Responsibilities of the EOCCS Project Leader within the Institution</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.3</td>
<td>Responsibilities of the individual Review Panel members</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.4</td>
<td>Additional responsibilities of the Chair of the Review Panel</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.5</td>
<td>Role of Corporate Reviewers</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.6</td>
<td>Role of Local Reviewers</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 1: Introduction to EOCCS

1.1. EOCCS - EFMD Global Network Online Course Certification System

EOCCS is an international course certification system operated by EFMD Global Network. It aims to evaluate the quality of any online business and/or management course that has a contemporary perspective and, where of an appropriately high quality, to certify it.

The process involves an in-depth review of individual courses through exemplary and contemporary comparison and benchmarking. The process considers a wide range of aspects as shown in the EOCCS Course Certification Framework:
These aspects include:

- The market positioning of the course
- The Institution’s resources allocated to support the course
- The appropriateness of the course team members that design, develop and deliver the course
- The design process including assessment of stakeholder requirements
- The course objectives and intended learning outcomes
- The curriculum content
- The balance between academic rigour and managerial dimensions
- The delivery system including the quality of teaching
- The depth and rigour of the assessment processes (relative to the level of the course)

1.2. Benefits of the EOCCS Certification Process

1. International Quality Benchmark
   - EOCCS is a demonstration of quality online learning which is determined by rigorous standards and Peer Review for Higher Education and Corporate Institutions, and Public Agencies
   - EOCCS is an indication of quality and can be used as part of marketing specific courses to potential learners

2. Continuous Improvement
   - The EOCCS application is an opportunity for an institution to reflect on best practices and innovative solutions in online learning for their own development
   - The Peer Review process, with active experts in the field, gives institutions constructive feedback, suggestions for improvement and future growth. EOCCS also explores the sustainability of an institution’s online learning offering

3. Community and Peer-to-Peer Learning
   - You can become part of an Annual Symposium and Community of Practice reporting on new practices, sharing experiences and exploring collective capabilities and future direction as a community
   - EOCCS enhances potential for international online collaborations and partnerships
   - Through EOCCS institutions can profit from mutual learning opportunities and gain insights into the “best practices” of EFMD members and other online learning practitioners and specialists in the field

1.3. Scope of EOCCS Certification

1.3.1. Course Scope

EOCCS may be applied to any online course or suite of courses at any course level (Bachelors, Masters, MBA, PhD or Executive Education) in the field of business and/or management provided it is at least equivalent to normally 20 hours of study.

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2 Please note that the term course in the following also covers the plural form and courses in a suite.
Please see Glossary in the EOCCS Standards & Criteria for definition of online course and a suite of courses.

Courses run by a consortium of 2 or more institutions, or run in partnership with an organisation, may also be offered up for assessment. In these cases, the EOCCS assessment process and fees are tailored to the course under review.

1.3.2. Differentiation from other accreditation systems

At the present time, EOCCS is the only course certification system able to assess individual courses in the full range from Bachelors to Doctoral degrees including Executive Education in the business and management education field.

The development of EOCCS was strongly influenced by the well-established and leading institutional accreditation systems run by EFMD, which include EQUIS and EPAS. The accreditation systems are separate services and offer different levels of accreditation and certification. While EQUIS provides a comprehensive review of all of an institution’s operations, EPAS reviews aspects of an institution’s other operations to the extent that they affect the quality of the programme under review. All these systems are part of a portfolio, along with EFMD Global Network Deans across Frontiers (EDAF). All assessment systems follow a common evaluation process and share the EFMD focus on continuous improvement and improving internationalisation and corporate links within business and management education worldwide.
Section 2: Management of EOCCS

EOCCS is operated by the Quality Services Department of EFMD with the strategic support of the **EOCCS Certification Board (CB)**. Based on the recommendations of the Review Panel (RP), the CB grants certification. The Board of EFMD appoints members of the CB.

2.1. The EFMD Board

The EFMD Board approves EOCCS policy, standards and procedures based on the proposals submitted by the Quality Services Department following consultation with the CB. It appoints the members of the Board (see the EFMD website for current membership). Any appeals made against certification decisions are also handled by the Board through an established Appeals Procedure (see Annex 10).

2.2. The Quality Services Department at EFMD

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

2.3. The EOCCS Certification Board

The CB is composed of academic and corporate representatives of high-profile organisations that are stakeholders in the quality improvement of management education. The CB advises the EOCCS Director on the strategic development of EOCCS. All major decisions concerning policy, standards and procedures are submitted to the CB for consultation.
The CB normally meets four (4) times a year at the request of the EOCCS Director, one of whom chairs the meetings. A detailed description of the Role and Functioning of the CB and a current members’ list are available on the EFMD Global Network website.

The CB evaluates Review Panel Reports (RPR) on courses that are being put forward for certification, and, based on recommendations in the reports, makes the final decision to confer EOCCS certification upon those business and management courses that have demonstrated excellence at an international level.

2.4. Peer Review Panel

The Review Panel (RP) will assess the course on the basis of information provided by the Institution in the EOCCS Application Form. The composition of the RP is covered in more detail in Section 6. The RP will have a dialogue with the Institution and will require access to the online learning platform, materials and other learning resources as appropriate. The RP will provide their assessment in a report including a recommendation for certification to the CB.

2.5. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

All members of EOCCS decision-making bodies and the RP are required to sign the EFMD Global Network Confidentiality Agreement (see Annex 7) and must abide by the EFMD Global Network Conflict of Interest Policy (see Annex 8).
Section 3: The EOCCS Certification Process

The main stages of the EOCCS certification process are as follows:

EOCCS Process Schedule

EOCCS is a process combining strategic development, on-going quality improvement and certification. Certification, in the most favourable circumstances, may be achieved within approximately ten (10) to twelve (12) weeks of application if the RP indicates that the course satisfies the criteria. The precise timings will be discussed and set between EOCCS and the applicant institution.

Key timings for the EOCCS process are explained in more detail in the following text.

Stage 0: Enquiry

This is the first direct contact between the Institution and EOCCS. It is an informal stage in the process and typically takes place at EFMD events and other conferences where EFMD Quality Services Directors are present, or by e-mail or telephone. Information on the EOCCS process may be downloaded from the EFMD Global Network website (http://www.efmdglobal.org/EOCCS) and consists of the **EOCCS Standards & Criteria, EOCCS Process Manual** and **Annexes**. The EOCCS representative can clarify with the Institution any issues or questions about the EOCCS process. If EOCCS is believed to be appropriate, the EOCCS representative will encourage the Institution to submit the EOCCS Application Form.
**Stage 1: EOCCS Application Form**

An institution that wishes to enter the EOCCS certification process sends an EOCCS Application Form to the EOCCS Office at EFMD Global Network in both Word and PDF formats. One Application Form needs to be filled in for each applicant course or a suite of courses (refer to Glossary in the **EOCCS Standards & Criteria**). The total length of the EOCCS Application Form should not exceed 15 pages excluding the required annexes with a font size not smaller than 11. Upon receipt and acceptance, the EOCCS Application Form will be sent to the EOCCS Review Panel (RP) for the assessment. The Institution will be invoiced for the certification process.

**Stage 2: Review**

By entering the process, the Institution authorises EFMD to use the EOCCS Application Form for EFMD research purposes and aggregate reporting. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured in such cases. Following the receipt of the EOCCS Application Form, the schedule of the Online Review is planned. The Review itself will take place by video conferencing and takes place at a time that suits both parties. Information on the Online Review is provided in Annex 3.

After the Online Review, the EOCCS Administrator drafts the Review Panel Report (RPR) and sends it to the other reviewers for suggestions and amendments. This normally takes about three (3) weeks. The RPR sets out the team’s final assessment of the course against the EOCCS quality criteria together with its recommendation regarding certification. This recommendation can be for 3-year certification, advisory process or denial of certification. The report will also give advice for potential improvements to the course. This report is for the use of the Certification Board (CB) in making its final decision on certification and for the use of the Institution in planning its future development.

The final draft report will be sent to the Institution for comment and confirmation of factual accuracy. All factual errors will then be corrected by the EOCCS Administrator in liaison with the RP. The RP may, at their discretion, take into account some of the Institution’s comments concerning the judgements expressed in the report. The final version of the report will be returned to the Institution, which will be asked to give formal authorisation to the EOCCS Office for the report to be submitted to the CB.

The final RPR is presented at the next CB meeting.

**Stage 3: Certification**

With the formal agreement of the Institution, the RPR containing the recommendation of the RP is submitted to the CB for the final decision on certification. The Board will only consider the report once all outstanding payments of the Institution towards the Quality Services Department have been made. The CB’s decision will be based on the findings and recommendation presented within the RPR and will be communicated (normally by telephone or e-mail) to the Dean or CEO of the Institution within 48 hours of the meeting of the CB.

The Institution will also receive a letter from the Chair of the CB formally communicating the decision.
The decision will be one of:

- **3-year Certification**
  Courses that, in the Board’s judgement, meet the EOCCS quality standards will be awarded EOCCS certification for a period of three (3) years. A certified course is likely to have most entries on the Quality Profile (QP) that “meet standard” and only a few below and some above. However, there is always room for improvement and evidence of continuing progress will be expected at the Re-certification review. The CB may specify areas for the improvement expected prior to the next certification cycle.

- **Non-Certification**
  Courses that, in the Board’s judgement, are below the EOCCS standards of quality in a given set of EOCCS criteria will be denied certification. In this situation, the Board will specify a number of improvements required before re-submission for certification.

- **Advisory Process**
  Courses that, in the Board’s judgement, are below the EOCCS standards of quality in a given set of EOCCS criteria but are close to meeting the standards can enter the stage of an advisory process with EFMD Global Network. If the Institution decides to enter the advisory process, the Institution will work out an action plan addressing the weaknesses that were identified in the RPR. The action plan will set out the individual actions with the objective of improving the areas of weakness and building on the areas for improvement. The Institution will be guided by EFMD Global Network in this process. The timescale for the improvement process shall not exceed 12 months. Once the institution and EOCCS agree that the suggestions have been satisfied, a smaller review will be organised and an updated report will be sent the CB for decision. This approach is very well aligned with the spirit of EOCCS where continuous improvement is one of its core values. No additional fees will be charged to the Institution.

Where quality is deemed to be below the EOCCS standard, both the degree to which it is below and the number of EOCCS criteria affected determine whether the course will receive 3-year certification, will qualify to enter the advisory process or will simply have its certification denied. The CB may not follow the recommendation of the RP if it perceives inconsistencies either between the Report and its annexes or inconsistency across the portfolio of RPRs of other courses.

A course that has been denied certification (or was withdrawn before the CB meeting) cannot be reconsidered for at least one (1) year after the CB’s decision. Institutions re-applying to EOCCS after failing to achieve certification should provide a Progress Report, in addition to the EOCCS Application Form. This should show how the Institution has overcome the weaknesses outlined in the Board’s letter and indicate the progress it has made in implementing the recommendations in the RPR.

The Institution can appeal against the decision on non-certification (see Annex 10).

**Specific policies applying after certification**

An institution that is awarded EOCCS certification for one or more of its courses must abide by the EOCCS Publicity Policy (see Annex 9).
It is important to note that institutions must inform the EOCCS Office of any major changes that take place within the institution which impact directly the certified course, for example major restructuring of the course or ownership change of the institution (see Annex 6).

*Note that the names of all courses and their institutions certified by EOCCS will be published on the EFMD Global Network website and in other documentation in accordance with the EU Directive on Freedom of Information. EFMD Global Network will not be held liable for any damage caused by such publication.*

**Stage 4: Re-Certification**

EOCCS certification is granted for a period of three (3) years, from the date of certification granting. Therefore, an institution that wishes to maintain its course certification must enter a process of Re-certification before the expiry of the 3-year period. Since the preparation for Re-certification may take several months, an institution should apply approximately six (6) months before the expiry. A period of grace is assured in such cases.

At the beginning of the 3rd year, the EOCCS Office will prompt the Institution about the expiry of its certification and the procedures described in this document for the renewal of certification. The Institution must then send the EOCCS Application Form for Re-certification (see Annex 11) to the EOCCS Office.

A prerequisite for Re-certification is that the course must have run at least once since initial certification with normally at least 20 participants and represent a minimum of normally 20 learning hours.

Institutions applying for Re-certification are subject to lower fees than institutions undergoing their first certification (see Annex 2). The process will also take 12 weeks.

**The Course Self-Assessment Report (CSAR)**

The Application Form for Re-certification consists of the Datasheet (DS), which must be updated by the Institution, and the Course Self-Assessment Report (CSAR), which should be limited by the Institution to a maximum of 8 (eight) pages excluding the required annexes with a font size not smaller than 11. The CSAR should focus on any major changes that have occurred in the areas of the four chapters of the *EOCCS Standards & Criteria* since the previous certification. This likely includes:

* An update on the institutional strategy, commitment and future plans
* An update on the institutional facilities and resources
* Any new roles that were added to the course team
* An update on how the Institution trains its faculty
* Any changes as regards the target group of the course
* Any changes to the learning design, course layout, content and/or delivery
* An update on the applied technology
* An update on the corporate input to the course
* Any changes to the review of the course
* Any changes to the assessment of participants
* Any changes to the monitoring of teaching and learning
The CSAR should explain the reasons for the implemented changes and analyse and evaluate the principal challenges that the Institution is now facing in relation to the certified course.

EOCCS recognises that in the case of a certified suite of courses, institutions may wish to add further courses to their certification as part of the re-certification process. In this case, the Institution should explain the reasons for adding the course to the suite and define the characteristics of it (i.e. learning outcomes etc.). Should the Institution seek to apply with a second stand-alone course for EOCCS certification, the Institution is asked to submit the regular EOCCS Application Form (see Annex 1).

The CSAR should also be written with careful reference to the observations and recommendations contained in the previous RPR, describing the progress towards the specified areas for improvement.

When compiling the CSAR, it is important to understand that the members of the RP will be different from those participating in the initial review; the new RP will have access to the previous CSAR.

**Re-certification review process**

Upon receipt and acceptance, the Application Form for Re-certification will be sent to a RP for the assessment. The Institution will be invoiced for the Re-certification process. The Online Review itself will take place by video conferencing and takes normally place within 5 weeks of the application.

The review process will differ from the initial review process described above (Stage 2) in that it will focus on the major changes explained in the CSAR.

The RP will normally comprise three (3) members (one Chair, one Reviewer and one EOCCS Administrator). The review will constitute a 90-minute dialogue between representatives of the institution and the RP. As the student perspective is a crucial part of all EOCCS certifications, at least two students will be interviewed in a separate session following the preceding discussion.

After the Online Review, the EOCCS Administrator drafts the RPR and sends it to the other reviewers for suggestions and amendments. This normally takes about three (3) weeks. The RPR sets out the team’s final assessment of the course against the EOCCS quality criteria together with its recommendation regarding Re-certification. This recommendation can be for 3-year Re-certification or denial of certification. The report will also give advice for potential improvements to the course. This report is for the use of the EOCCS CB in making its final decision on Re-certification and for the use of the Institution in planning its future development.

The final draft report will be sent to the Institution for comment and confirmation of factual accuracy. All factual errors will then be corrected by the EOCCS Administrator in liaison with the RP. The RP may, at their discretion, take into account some of the Institution’s comments concerning the judgements expressed in the report. The final version of the report will be returned to the Institution, which will be asked to give formal authorisation to the EOCCS Office for the report to be submitted to the CB. The final RPR is presented at the next CB meeting.
The following stage will be the same as in initial certification processes explained above (Stage 3: Certification). The roles and responsibilities of the RP and the institution are outlined in Section 6 below.

Policy on non-renewal of certification

EFMD Accreditations and Certifications are designed to be demanding. They provide valuable incentives to even the highest quality institutions to achieve, maintain and develop. Since some institutions may not achieve the required standard and will be given a negative outcome from a re-certification; EFMD recognises that withdrawal of certification may be harmful to the institution. Non-certification and non-re-certification are, therefore, mitigated by:

a) giving more time for the institution to manage the situation rather than be instantly removed from the list of certified courses.

b) granting institutions an opportunity to state their case again, if they believe this will be to their benefit.

Deferral Policy

The following process will apply to the Re-certification of courses previously certified:

1. When the institution learns through the RPR of a recommendation by the RP for non-certification and the institution then decides to withdraw from the certification process, its name will be removed from the list of certified courses six (6) months after the date of the CB meeting to which the Report would have otherwise been submitted.

2. If the CB makes a negative decision (either based on a negative recommendation or by not supporting a positive recommendation in the RPR), the course will be automatically placed on Deferral and it will not be removed immediately from the list of certified courses.

3. The institution will then be given the option to decide (within a maximum of three (3) months of the Board’s decision date) whether it will accept the non-certification or aim for another full Review to take place within one (1) year of the Board’s decision date. This review will require the preparation of a new CSAR by the institution and will involve a new RP.

4. The offer of a new RP should not be interpreted as recognition that the previous RP, the Board or anyone other involved parties from EFMD did not perform as required. Should the institution disagree with this, it should appeal the decision rather than opting for a new RP. The new RP is an additional opportunity granted to the institution that could potentially lose EOCCS certification. The Institution should then make sure that the new Application Form for Re-certification and the information provided to the new RP persuasively convey the quality of the course according to the established quality framework. The institution should therefore pay particular attention to the recommendations made in the latest RPR and in the Board’s letter of non-certification. Both of these will be part of the documentation provided to the new RP.

5. No application fee (see Annex 2) will be charged for the new review but the review fee applicable in the year of the Board’s decision will be charged. The certification fee for the deferral year (i.e. for extension of certification) will
also be charged. If the institution then cancels the review during the Deferral period, a cancellation fee will be charged and the course will be removed from the list of certified courses (allowing the six (6) months grace period from the date of the Board’s decision as indicated below).

6. If the institution opts for the new review, it will remain on the list of certified courses until the Board takes a decision on the second RPR. A negative decision at that time will be final, i.e. it will not be allowed a further deferral period or appeal and the course will be removed immediately from the list of certified courses.

7. If the institution rejects the option of a new review and accepts the non-certification decision, it will remain on the list of certified courses for a total of six (6) months after the Board’s decision date.
Section 4: Certification Guidelines

4.1. EOCCS Certification Criteria

EOCCS is designed to certify high quality courses aimed at supporting the development of participants for careers in international business and management. Institutions offering such courses are likely to have a national or international reputation and to have a clear international perspective. The Certification criteria for EOCCS therefore consider both institutional and course dimensions.

Item 1. Institutional status and reputation:

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

- The institution has a record at course creation as well as delivery. It must have been in existence for at least one (1) year.
- It should have a strong reputation. Evidence for such a reputation should be factual and objective. Indicators may include accreditation or certification by other bodies, positive national audit reports, strong media rankings, list of high quality international partners or other equivalent measures of recognition.

Item 2. Course Team(s):

The course team (assistants, authors, discussion leaders, e-tutors, facilitators, instructors, quality managers, retention specialists, content specialists, teachers, teaching assistants, community managers, etc.) must be of a size and be qualified appropriately for the level of course offered. The mix should have international expertise and experience. There should be evidence of high quality intellectual activity or scholarship (e.g. case development, consulting projects, applied research, academic research) by team members so as to underpin the academic depth of the courses under review. The team should contain sufficient subject, didactic and technical expertise.

Item 3. Nature of the Course:

The course must aim to develop individuals within the broad field of business and management. It must have a sound academic standing but also an appropriate practical approach and include an international perspective. The course should enjoy a good national reputation and may be certified at the national level (where available and appropriate).

Item 4. Course level:

The course would normally be at Certificate, Diploma, Bachelors or Masters (or equivalent) level. Properly designed and delivered vocational or training programmes may also be eligible.
Item 5. **Course quality:**

The length of the course must be appropriate to the level of programme. The content must have appropriate academic depth and rigour covering normally at least 20 hours of study and be designed to develop the relevant intellectual skills and managerial competences of participants.

Item 6. **Credibility and sustainability:**

In order to have an established reputation and credibility and to ensure its long-term viability, the course must have been developing participants for at least one (1) course run.

Item 7. **Minimum size of each intake for mutual learning:**

To ensure interaction between participants for mutual learning, courses should have a minimum cohort size, or annual group intake of normally twenty (20) participants. This minimum must be maintained throughout the certification process and certification period.

Item 8. **Contemporary perspective:**

In order to develop participants for a career in management, the course should develop a contemporary perspective. This is likely to require a diverse mix of participants, up-to-date academic content, the opportunity for interaction with international colleagues and the delivery of some course elements in English or another major foreign language.

Item 9. **Organisational perspective:**

The course should develop an understanding of the organisational world, which is likely to require corporate input to the course and the opportunity for work-based learning. Participants should be able to develop practical transferable skills.
Section 5: Guidance for Course Self-Assessment

5.1. The Purpose of Course Self-Assessment

The EOCCS Course Certification Framework and supporting documentation provide an external benchmark against which the Institution can measure its performance. The thoroughness with which the self-assessment is carried out and the breadth of involvement with the process will determine a large part of the added value of the quality improvement tool.

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

a) Provide an opportunity for the institution to take stock of its situation with respect to the course

b) Carry out a comprehensive review of the course

c) Result in an unbiased and critical self-evaluation

d) Provide basis and context for the Review Panel (RP) to begin assessment

5.2. The Course Self-Assessment Process

EFMD recommends that as soon as possible the institution should appoint a Project Leader to manage the process and write the Course Self-Assessment Report.

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

The following criteria may be helpful in establishing the Course Self-Assessment process:

- **Systematic process:** the Course Self-Assessment should be well-planned, thorough and comprehensive. The assessment should be driven by a methodology seeking to answer key questions.

- **Objectivity and balance:** the Course Self-Assessment exercise 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 institution should use as many sources of information as possible.

- **Participation:** in collecting data and evaluating the results of the Self-Assessment, the institution should involve a variety of groups to agree key conclusions and recommendations. This is not just a way of improving objectivity, but also a way of incorporating different perspectives, of improving communication and commitment to the findings.
5.3. The Course Self-Assessment Report

The Course Self-Assessment Report (CSAR) should be based on the EOCCS Standards & Criteria document, which sets out the full range of the EOCCS quality standards and the criteria against which the quality of the course will be measured. The document also lists the supporting information and materials that should be included in the CSAR.

The standards and associated criteria are grouped into four chapters in accordance with the EOCCS Certification Framework (see Section 1):

1. The Institutional Context
2. Course Composition
3. Course Delivery & Operations
4. Quality Assurance Processes

A copy of the EOCCS Standards & Criteria document can be obtained from the EFMD Global Network website or from the EOCCS Office.

The CSAR should lead to a conclusion in which the institution makes a case for EOCCS certification for the applicant course. The report should be self-evaluative and self-critical and should demonstrate how the Institution has addressed existing weaknesses and how it will do so in the future. The overall report should be a unified piece of work, rather than a collection of separate individual reports.

The format of the CSAR should follow the four chapters of the EOCCS Standards & Criteria document. It should be noted that the EOCCS criteria are generally phrased in the form of questions, which should be interpreted against the level of course that is to be reviewed.

Institutions should normally follow the order of the sections of the EOCCS Standards & Criteria. It is not necessarily expected that the institution should address each point in detail. The institution is expected to provide their own conclusions from the Course Self-Assessment process about the considered dimensions in each section. It is expected that the key issues that are relevant for a comprehensive assessment of the course be carefully addressed.

The items in the EOCCS Standards & Criteria document are formulated in qualitative terms. However, the information provided by the institution should, where appropriate, allow an assessment of the quantitative positioning of the course in relation to each criterion.
6.1. Introduction

The Certification Board (CB) has agreed that the course standards should be of demonstrably high quality and worthy of international recognition. It is therefore important for the Review Panel (RP) to establish rigorous evaluations noting that EOCCS is likely to be more difficult to achieve than a standard national certification, not least because of the expectation that courses will have international and corporate perspectives in line with EFMD’s mission.

This section explains the overall process of evaluation and is intended to be a guide for all the parties involved: the Institution and its course team(s), the RP and the CB.

6.1.1. Composition of the Review Panel

Each RP is composed of four (4) members with experience in the organisation and delivery of business and management courses. They normally have different nationalities and/or work in different countries. Each team includes:

- The Chair of the RP: Dean, Associate Dean, Head of Online Learning, Director of Learning and Teaching or equivalent normally from a different country from the Institution being assessed.
- Two (2) academic representatives (Associate Dean or Course Director) or representatives that are experts in online learning and technologies (e.g. gaming, corporate learning).
- Organisational representative or senior manager of a professional association.

While the working language of EOCCS is English, every attempt will be made to include a local language speaker within the RP. In each Panel, there should be one member who is familiar with the local educational environment and can explain the contextual background of the Institution and course for the benefit of the RP.

In addition, at least one member of the RP should have specialist knowledge of the specific subject matter of the course being assessed and another member should be well-versed in online learning technologies.

Each member of the Panel will have to sign the EFMD Global Network Confidentiality Agreement with respect to the information provided to them in the context of the reviews, stating also their agreement to conform to the EFMD Global Network Conflicts of Interest Policy (see Annexes 7 and 8). In accepting an invitation to participate in a RP, each member commits to being present throughout the entire meeting.

Normally, an onsite visit is not required; however, the EOCCS Office or RP may require an onsite visit as deemed appropriate with a minimum of two (2) reviewers (see Annex 3). It should be noted that the RP members volunteer their time and are unpaid for their role in the process but will claim reimbursement from the institution for travel and accommodation costs related to the review should an onsite visit be required.
6.1.2. Objectives of the Review Panel within the EOCCS process

The objectives of the Review are as follows:

- To engage in a constructive dialogue with the Institution.
- To seek additional information as necessary in order to establish a comprehensive understanding of the course offering.
- To confirm and/or challenge the main issues raised in the institution’s Application.
- To make an overall assessment of the course against the EOCCS Standards & Criteria.
- To provide recommendations for future development and quality improvement.

There should be a careful balance between the role of the RP process in providing sufficient information to the CB to arrive at a decision on certification and the wider, strategic and quality improvement role of the RP. In carrying out an EOCCS Review, it is important that all parties begin the process with a clear idea of what the Review is designed to achieve. The success of the process rests on a number of conditions being met by all those involved, e.g.:

- The assignment of a trustworthy and credible RP to the institution.
- Thorough preparation by the institution through the production of the CSAR.
- Careful reading of the EOCCS Application Form by the RP.
- Clear relationships and expectations on the part of all involved.
- The online assessment of the course, platform, learning environment, etc.
- Open discussions free of excessive formality between the RP and the key stakeholders of the course.
- The presentation of confidential feedback and recommendations for certification in a professional manner, combining the requirements of the CB with an approach that respects the needs of the Institution as a client.

6.2. Preparation for the Review

6.2.1 Study of the Course Self-Assessment Report by the Peer Reviewers

It is very important that each member studies the CSAR carefully before the Panel comes together for the online briefing meeting. As an important starting point for discussion during this meeting, each member should attempt to answer the questions listed below:

- Are all the areas covered by the EOCCS Certification Framework adequately addressed in the report?
- What further information is required?
- Is the report sufficiently self-critical and analytical?
- Is the Institution’s local context clearly explained?
- Does the course fit the Institution’s overall strategy and programme/course portfolio?
- Are the mechanisms for the strategic management of the course clearly visible from the report?
- Are the problems facing the course clearly formulated?
- Does the Institution clearly sketch out how it plans to deal with these problems?
- What assessment can be formulated against the EOCCS criteria?
What are the main issues that will require careful analysis during the subsequent discussions?

By answering these questions, each RP member is not tied to a final judgement but is simply forming a first impression based on the written information supplied. The schedule of the Online Review 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 RP members during the briefing meeting in order to identify further information that should be supplied by the institution and to prepare the focus of the interviews.

6.3 Review Panel Meeting

6.3.1. Briefing meeting of the Review Panel

The work of the RP will normally begin with a briefing meeting the purpose of which is to:

- brief the RP by the Chair,
- review the Institution’s Application and identify the key issues,
- identify any supplementary information to be requested,
- agree on the working methods and allocation of responsibilities within the RP to match interest and expertise,
- review the schedule for the virtual meetings.

The RP should also use the meeting to assure themselves that the certification criteria are still being met, e.g. the student intake numbers meet the minimum required.

6.3.2. The EOCCS Quality Profile and Criteria Evaluation Guide

The EOCCS Quality Profile (QP, see Annex 4) is used to summarise the RP’s overall conclusions after initial reviews or reviews for Re-certification. It lists the key criteria for each chapter of the EOCCS Standards & Criteria. The form requires the RP to agree on one of the four possible evaluations for each criterion, the choices being “Meets Standard”, “Above Standard”, “Below Standard” or “N/A”. Guidance on these evaluations is given in the Profile itself.

The QP is used to structure the work of the RP when it meets to reach agreement on its assessment.

At the beginning of this preliminary evaluation, the Chair will invite the members of the Panel to make a personal evaluation against each assessment criterion. The normal procedure is for each member of the Panel 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 themselves to an initial judgement that the Chair opens the debate to work towards a common position that will be entered onto a consolidated version of the QP. 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 QP 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 RP. The document will be attached to the RPR and will be submitted to the CB.

The EOCCS Criteria Evaluation Guide (CEG, see Annex 5) is a tool to assist the RP members in preparing the Review and filling out the QP.

6.4 Review Panel Decision Making Process and Feedback

The decision-making process should be based on a consensus evaluation of the QP. Similarly, the RP conclusions and certification recommendations should be agreed by consensus. A certified course is likely to have most entries on the QP that "meet standard" and only a few below and some above. The choices are 3-year certification, advisory process or non-certification. These recommendations must be clearly substantiated with reference to observations set out in the consolidated QP.

The RP is not in a position to directly base its judgement upon comparison with courses run by other institutions, nor is it expected to do so. On the other hand, its judgement must be based firmly on the definition of EOCCS standards as set out in the document entitled EOCCS Standards & Criteria.

A formal oral or written feedback session to the Institution at the end of the RP Process is a scheduled part of the process. The Chair of the RP will give the feedback to the Institution and course management, and an outline of the feedback should be “rehearsed” with the RP beforehand. The whole RP is expected to be present during the feedback so as to support the Chair by presenting a united team.

6.5 Review Panel Report

The Review Panel Report (RPR) is the culmination of the assessment process and is an extremely important document not only for the CB but also for the institution’s management team. The report will have considerable impact on activities concerning the course and so great care should be taken with the wording of key sections, especially where the comments are critical.

6.5.1 Formulating the Report

The EOCCS Administrator is responsible for drafting the Report using the QP as a basis. The CB has agreed on a preferred structure for this written report (see template later in this Section). In particular, the report should give a brief summary for each major sub-section of the QP.

The EOCCS Administrator in liaison with the Chair and RP should prepare a summary of the written report, which includes a General Assessment, Strengths & Weaknesses, Recommendations on Certification (with conditions if necessary) and Suggestions for Further Improvements plus the QP. The report should make a recommendation to the CB for 3 year-certification, improvement process or non-certification.

The documents should be sufficiently extensive to provide enough evaluation of the course for the CB to be able to make a well-informed and rational decision and for the institution to receive useful guidance on potential improvements to the
course. It is expected that there will be 5-6 pages per course plus a further 3-4 pages to cover the institutional and QA aspects (i.e. around 9 pages for one course and 8-10/12 for two courses – this excludes annexes).

6.5.2. **Procedure for the Review Panel Report**

1. The Chair consolidates comments from the Panel, using the QP and the minutes of the oral presentation.

2. The EOCCS Administrator writes up the first draft of the report.

3. The EOCCS Administrator circulates it to the Panel where each member is expected to provide input and comment on the draft.

4. The EOCCS Administrator amends the report, taking into account the comments received from the other members of the RP, and sends the revised draft, including the summary assessment forms (in separate files), to the EOCCS Office.

5. The revised version, which includes the RP’s recommendation on certification, is edited, formatted and proofread by the EOCCS Office and submitted to the institution. The editing process is mainly to ensure that the report’s documents are complete and coherent and that arguments are well made so as to lead to the recommendations on certification and the areas for improvement.

6. The institution responds to any factual inconsistencies or misunderstandings and returns it to the EOCCS Office.

7. Following receipt of comments from the institution, changes may be made and the EOCCS Administrator, in collaboration with the EOCCS Office will complete the final report.

8. The final version is sent to the institution (normally within five (5) weeks from the date of the RP Meeting), which is requested to give its authorisation for the report to be submitted to the CB.

9. Once this authorisation has been obtained, the final report is submitted to the CB together with the QP, and the most recent EOCCS Application Form.

10. The RP members receive the final version of the RPR after the Certification decision.
Review Panel Report template

Length: 8-15 pages in total, excluding annexes
Title Page
Table of Contents

1. Introduction
   Composition of the RP
   – name, position and country of each reviewer
   – any additional comments on RP

   Scope of the assessment
   – definition of course under assessment

   Background
   – background on the review: initial or Re-certification, etc.
   – recommendations and suggestions in previous report

   Acknowledgements
   – comment on the EOCCS Application Form

2. General Assessment
   – The findings of the RP covering the main points or sub-headings of the QP

3. Overall Strengths and Weaknesses
   – based on the feedback of the RP following the meeting
   – succinct factual information to support the judgement of the RP,
   – particularly for issues rated “above” or “below” standard in the QP

4. Recommendations
   – for a period of three (3) years
   – for entering the advisory process
   – or non-certification, giving a detailed justification for this recommendation

5. Suggestions for Further Improvement
   – further advice that the Institution may wish to consider for the course

Appendix 1: EOCCS Quality Profile
   – consensus version

Appendix 2: EOCCS Application Form

Appendix 3: EOCCS Certification Board’s letter (if Re-certification)
6.6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.6.1. Responsibilities of the EOCCS Team at EFMD Global Network

- Liaise with the institution throughout the process.
- Advise and assist in the application process.
- Fix the timetable for the EOCCS assessment and set the date of the RP Meeting.
- Establish the schedule for the RP in liaison with the institution.
- Review the EOCCS Application Form (including annexes) and to initially confirm that the criteria have been met.
- Ensure there is adequate time between receipt of the EOCCS Application Form and the date of the RP Meeting (at least 4 weeks).
- Designate the members of the RP and secure the necessary agreement from the Institution.
- Brief the RP on the requirements of the EOCCS assessment and to confirm receipt of all necessary supporting materials.
- Make the necessary logistical arrangements with the institution.
- Arrange for the dispatch of materials produced by the institution to the members of the RP, co-ordinate the compilation and finalisation of the RPR, in liaison with the Chair of the RP and the representative of the institution, and its presentation to the CB.
- Ensure that an EOCCS Process Evaluation Forms from the institution and the RP are completed.
- Arrange for the safe disposal of all sensitive materials following acceptance of the report by the institution.
- Communicate the outcome of the CB decision to the institution (typically to the Dean or Director).

6.6.2. Responsibilities of the EOCCS Project Leader within the Institution

- Coordinate the Self-Assessment process and the preparation of the EOCCS Application Form.
- Ensure the timely production of the materials for the Application, including annexes and supporting documentation to the main report.
- Ensure that all Panel members have access to the virtual learning environment of the course at least one (1) week before the date of the review.
- Liaise with the EOCCS office.
- Establish a programme for the RP meeting in collaboration with the EOCCS Office.
- In the event of an onsite visit, make the necessary practical logistic arrangements for the visit, including local travel and accommodation.
- In the event of an onsite visit, reimburse all travel and accommodation fees for the RP within six (6) weeks from the date of the visit.
- Ensure adequate access to key stakeholders during the RP Meeting.
- Check the final RPR for factual inconsistencies.
- Complete the EOCCS Process Evaluation Form for Institutions and return it online to the EFMD Global Network.

N.B. Communication with the RP by the Institution should always be via the EOCCS Office or with the EOCCS Office in copy.
6.6.3. **Responsibilities of the individual Review Panel members**

**Before the Panel Review**

- Liaise with the EOCCS Office and Chair of the Panel on the requirements of the EOCCS Review.
- Prepare themselves adequately about the objectives of the assessment and the criteria used by a careful reading of the EOCCS documents.
- Read the EOCCS Application Form carefully and carry out a preliminary SWOT analysis against the EOCCS criteria.
- Make appropriate and timely meeting arrangements in accordance with the guidelines given by the EOCCS Office.
- Convey to the Institution and the EOCCS Office details of their communication arrangements and any special requirements they may have.

**During the dialogue with the institution**

- Ensure adequate preparation for all meetings.
- Be present throughout the entire Review.
- Fulfil specified and agreed responsibilities within the team, such as the provision of specialist expertise.
- Act as the main spokesperson for some sessions, as agreed with the Chair.
- Document their own findings clearly enough to support the work of the Chair.
- Operate in the spirit of consensus. If a Panel member disagrees with the decisions arrived at by the Team, they must nonetheless abide by the majority opinion, while being free to express a minority view in the report.
- Hand in to the Chair all relevant documentation relating to their personal assessment (notably the CEG (see Annex 5) and QP (see Annex 4)).

**Following the dialogue with the institution**

- Liaise, as necessary, with the Chair and other Panel members to confirm the final decision on certification.
- Contribute to the drafting of the final report.
- Provide all requested documentation required for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.
- Complete the EOCCS Process Evaluation Form for Panel members and return it online to the EOCCS Office.
- Make arrangements for the destruction of all sensitive materials relating to the meeting following acceptance of the final report.
- Avoid expressing any opinion or communicating the results of the assessment to any person outside the RP and the EOCCS Office.
6.6.4. Additional responsibilities of the Chair of the Review Panel

Before the Panel Review

➢ Upon receipt of the EOCCS Application Form (including annexes), check if both documents are adequate and inform immediately the EOCCS Office of any inconsistencies or problem areas in the reports.

During the dialogue with the institution

➢ Brief the members of the Panel on the review process at the initial Briefing Meeting.
➢ Act as the main spokesperson for the Panel.
➢ Ensure adequate preparation for meetings.
➢ Determine the delegation of lead responsibilities within the team.
➢ Divide up some sessions and responsibilities to individuals.
➢ Lead the Panel towards a set of conclusions during the dialogue.
➢ Ensure that the members of the team complete the assessment documents.
➢ Hold a meeting of the Panel normally after the conclusion of the dialogue with the Institution during which the team agrees on its conclusions and recommendation.
➢ Run the debriefing for the Institution during the final meeting.
➢ Inform the EOCCS Office urgently of any unusual incident that may disrupt the meeting.

Following the dialogue

➢ Lead a conversation, either via email or a subsequent meeting to agree or debate the overall views of the Panel members in relation to the satisfaction of the core criteria, in particular reference to the QP and CEG.
➢ Provide amendments to the draft report where necessary, in consultation with the EOCCS Administrator and the other members of the Panel, if appropriate.

6.6.5. Role of Corporate Reviewers

The corporate Panel member plays an important role in the Panel 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.

6.6.6. Role of Local Reviewers

The local Reviewer is familiar with the local educational environment and can explain the contextual background of the Institution and course for the benefit of the RP. Normally this reviewer should speak the language of the country and is selected in agreement with the institution under review.
Further Information and Contacts

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

http://www.efmdglobal.org/EOCCS

Alternatively, you can contact EOCCS Office:

eoccs@efmdglobal.org