

Annex 4. Code of ethics and independence requirements

Code of ethics and rules of conduct for members of the panel

- 1 A panel member respects the mission of the institution and the programme. A panel member is aware of their role and performs this role with a maximum **respect** for all parties involved.
- 2 A panel member may **not be guided** or influenced in their judgment by persons or parties involved with the programme or institution, or by other concerned parties. A panel member **speaks based on their own expertise**, in their own name and **does not express the opinion of any organisation** of which the panel member may be a member.
- 3 When reviewing the quality, a panel member must be able to **distance themselves sufficiently from personal ideas, convictions or preferences** regarding the domain or discipline that is the subject of the review.
- 4 A panel member forms their judgment **based on the review principles** from the established accreditation framework.
- 5 A panel member **bases their judgment** on the following information:
 - the self-evaluation report submitted by the programme, including the annexes and data;
 - any additional information provided at the request of the panel;
 - the interviews conducted as part of the site visit;
 - the observations made during the site visit;
 - the panel's own examination of other public information (e.g. websites).
- 6 The **review** by a panel member must **meet the following requirements**:
 - expertise and professionalism;
 - independence and objectivity;
 - care and consistency;
 - transparency and unbiasedness.
- 7 A panel member **shall not use information** gathered in the context of the review for personal or professional purposes. All information will be treated **confidentially**.
- 8 A panel member shall conduct the review in accordance with the **VLUHR QA [AI Policy](#)**. Where AI applications are used to support their activities, they shall be used in a careful and responsible manner, with due regard for the confidentiality of information, the independence of judgement and the applicable legal requirements. The panel member remains fully responsible at all times for their own analyses, judgements and recommendations.
- 9 A panel member **does not accept any gifts or rewards** from the programme or institution.
- 10 A panel member **has no financial or commercial interest** in the programme to be reviewed at the institution or association to which the institution belongs.
- 11 A panel member is aware of the complexity of the planning of the review process and the visit, as well as of the various parties involved, and will therefore, except in cases of force majeure, **make every effort to comply with all agreements** regarding timing, attendance, tasks as panel members, and so on.

Independence requirements and grounds for incompatibility of panel members

Cannot be appointed as chair or member of the panel:

- 1° Persons who are/were employed at the institution at the time of the composition of the panel or during the previous five years. This includes:
 - Persons who are/were staff members in the institution by virtue of an appointment or employment contract, irrespective of the nature of the employment or source of remuneration;
 - Persons who regularly give/have given advice or carry out/have carried out assignments for the benefit of the programme or institution (such as giving a guest lesson, lecture or workshop, participating in a promotion or appointment committee, etc.);
 - Persons who are/have been involved in the organisation or evaluation of courses in the programme or at the institution;
 - Persons who are/were members of a central governing body of the institution or of the association to which the institution belongs.
- 2° Persons who, at the time of the composition of the panel, have a personal relationship (including kinship up to the second degree) with a person falling within one of the above-mentioned capacities.