

# HCERES

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STRATEGIC

PLAN

2016 - 2020







## “Strengthen our country’s confidence in the evaluation of its higher education and research system”

Michel Cosnard, President of HCERES

### Introduction

This document sets out the strategic objectives of the French High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES) for the coming years, with a view to fulfilling the missions entrusted to it by the 2013 French Act on higher education and research. This Act transformed AERES into HCERES, adjusted some of its missions and entrusted it with new ones, while maintaining its status as an independent administrative authority.

HCERES' overarching goal for 2020 is to fulfil all its missions in line with the highest professional and ethical standards in service of all higher education and research institutions, their components, staff and supervising bodies.

This plan was developed at the same time as the HCERES self-evaluation report was being drafted with a view to its recognition on a European level. The strategic plan therefore builds on the strengths and weaknesses identified therein. It was drawn up by the management team in consultation with members of the HCERES Board and staff (administrative staff and scientific delegates). It is intentionally short and is structured around 9 areas, which break down into operational objectives, milestones and monitoring indicators.

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## STRENGTHEN THE COMMITMENT OF HCERES TO SERVING EVALUATED ENTITIES

HCERES is an independent administrative authority responsible for evaluating higher education and research institutions in France. The evaluation process is carried out every five years and offers institutions and their components support in their progress and the achievement of their strategic priorities. HCERES thereby supports the scientific and educational policy of institutions.

For evaluations carried out by HCERES, work needs to be continued to implement an evaluation model for improving the quality of French higher education and research. This requires a shared approach to evaluation between HCERES and the relevant institutions, recognition of the diversity of institutions, programmes and research units, and the adaptation of criteria in line with this diversity.

Special attention will be paid to evaluating territorial coordinations. Given their diversity, an integrated evaluation system will be implemented to give a general understanding of the grouping, the institutions attached to it, and its research units and programmes.

The evaluation of research bodies will be carried out in accordance with their missions, specific fields of research and position in the research system.

Finalised standards for evaluating research bodies or standards which are primarily focused on technological research will be reviewed to take all missions into account.

Regarding evaluations conducted by other bodies, whose procedures are validated by HCERES, a consultation mechanism will also be developed and implemented so that institutions can exercise their freedom to choose an evaluation body.

Finally, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, HCERES will implement three new missions in accordance with French Act no. 2013-660 of 22 July 2013:

- “ensuring that all missions defined by law and the specific status of higher education and research personnel are taken into account in their evaluations;
- “ensuring that activities relating to the dissemination of scientific, technical and industrial culture are properly taken into account in the career progression of higher education and research personnel;
- “conducting *ex-post* evaluation of investment programmes and private bodies receiving public funding.”

## OBJECTIVES FOR 2020

1. Develop an evaluation charter adopted by the Board.
2. Precede each evaluation campaign with consultation meetings with the evaluated entities.
3. Carry out satisfaction surveys at the end of each evaluation campaign.
4. Implement the three new provisions of the 2013 Act

## ANNUAL MONITORING INDICATORS

1. Evaluation charter adopted by the planned date.
2. Number of consultation sessions (1 per evaluated institution).
3. Percentage of satisfied evaluated entities (100%).

## MILESTONES FOR 2016 - 2020

### **2016**

Adoption of the evaluation charter.

### **2016-2020**

Discussion process on the 3 new missions with the relevant stakeholders, and implementation.

### **2016-2020**

Implementation of consultation meetings with the evaluated entities.

### **2016-2020**

Performance of satisfaction surveys.



## PROMOTE ETHICAL AND HIGH-QUALITY EVALUATION AND CONSOLIDATE PEER-REVIEW SYSTEM

### **Promote ethical evaluation**

Implementation of evaluation must comply with the main principles of independence, transparency, impartiality and equal treatment. It must also meet international ethical rules for peer-review system, in particular by preventing and excluding any possibility of a conflict of interests. The aim is to develop a culture of ethical standards and integrity for HCERES experts and staff.

### **Consolidate the pool of experts**

The transparency and quality of the recruitment process for experts, their training, and renewal of the pool of experts are key for the credibility and success

of an evaluation agency. The aim is to increase the rigour of the recruitment of experts by including ethical standards, ensuring equality and opening up to international experts.

### **Consolidate the work of scientific staff**

The role of scientific staff (or scientific delegates) is key to the quality of evaluation implementation. They need to demonstrate great integrity with regard to HCERES, while remaining in contact with their respective communities. They also play an important role in the quality and acceptability of evaluation practices and any changes thereto. The aim is to harmonise the missions of scientific staff in HCERES and to clarify their recruitment processes and criteria.



## OBJECTIVES FOR 2020

1. Create systems for tools to ensure ethical principles.
2. Develop a formal approved recruitment process for scientific delegates and experts, including annual campaigns and encouraging gender equality.
3. Develop common foundational training in evaluation and quality assurance for staff and experts, which is integrated into evaluation processes.
4. Create systems for training scientific delegates and support staff in the practices of other evaluation institutions, in particular international institutions.



## ANNUAL MONITORING INDICATORS

1. Number and percentage of declarations of interest submitted by experts.
2. Number of academics, representatives from the business and cultural world, engineering, technical, administrative staff, etc. and students involved in the evaluation processes and measurement of gender equality.
3. Number of training sessions for HCERES staff and experts and attendance rates.
4. Number of experts in each of the four pools.



## MILESTONES FOR 2016 - 2020

### 2017

Declarations of interests will be systematically received and taken into account during the creation of panels of experts. HCERES administration will have assimilated and reinforced this measure.

### 2017

The process for recruiting scientific delegates and experts will have been defined and validated by the Board. Gender equality will be an important feature.

### 2018

As of Group D, four pools of experts will have been established: students, academics, representatives from the business and cultural world and engineering, technical and administrative staff, etc. These pools will be used for the creation of panels of experts and will be formed via recruitment campaigns.

### 2018-2019

HCERES will have adapted its organisational structure in order to create a system for training its staff, scientific delegates and experts.



## ENSURE THE INDEPENDENCE OF HCERES AND ITS POSITION AMONG OTHER EVALUATION STAKEHOLDERS

The impartiality of HCERES evaluations is recognised. However, the concept of independence must not prevent dialogue with evaluation stakeholders. Prior dialogue with institutions is now included in HCERES practices, but dialogue with the supervising bodies, various conferences and representative organisations (including student organisations) is limited. Over and above the practice of gathering operating feedback, it is important to establish a framework and methods to meet the needs for consultation with a larger audience about the development of methodological tools and the use of evaluation reports. To this end, HCERES will found a body for institutional dialogue.

In a similar vein, HCERES must work in accord with other evaluation bodies, such as the French Universities Board (CNU), French National Committee for Scientific Research (CoNRS), and the institutions' evaluation committees and academic boards (or equivalent).

Work will be carried out to avoid duplication, with a view to simplification and greater consistency for

evaluated entities. Some HCERES missions can overlap with the missions of other bodies such as the IGAENR or the French Court of Auditors (regarding governance, management, etc.). In the same way, there needs to be better coordination of the evaluations carried out by bodies such as the CTI for engineering schools, the CEFDG for business schools, or the CCN-IUT for IUTs.

Independence can also be considered from the perspective of HCERES funding. From the start, its business model has been based on three principles:

- Evaluation is free of charge;
- A constant number of entities are evaluated;
- Universities and research bodies contribute through the delegation or secondment of scientific staff.

However, institutions want delegations and secondments of scientific staff to be fully reimbursed, the number of entities to be evaluated is constantly increasing, and the law has granted new missions to HCERES. This situation requires a revision of the HCERES business model.



## OBJECTIVES FOR 2020

1. Convene the institutional dialogue body twice a year in order to make proposals for changes to the evaluation system and best monitor changes in the higher education and research system.
2. Specify the scope of activity for the various evaluation bodies with the stakeholders concerned, in order to avoid duplication.
3. Develop a business model suited to the development of HCERES activity.
4. Compensate all delegations and secondments according to the payroll cost.

## ANNUAL MONITORING INDICATORS

1. Number of meetings of the institutional dialogue body (2 per year).
2. Share of funding from other ministries.
3. Percentage of delegations and secondments reimbursed according to the payroll costs.
4. Share of total compensation allocated to institutions in the operating budget.

## MILESTONES FOR 2016 - 2020

### **2016**

Establishment of the institutional dialogue body.

### **2016-2017**

Development of a new business model following consultation with the ministries concerned and representatives of evaluated institutions.

### **2016-2017**

Recruitment of new scientific delegates on a new financial basis.

### **2017**

Implementation of the new funding model.

### **2018**

Renewal of the institutional dialogue body.

### **2018**

Recruitment of new scientific delegates on a new financial basis.

### **2019**

Delegations and secondments all reimbursed according to the payroll cost.

## AREA 4

# CONDUCT INTEGRATED EVALUATION FOR SITE POLICIES

The stakes for HCERES are high in this area and they affect the entire strategic plan.

It is going to have to move from the integrated evaluation of institutions to the integrated evaluation of sites, starting the evaluation process with the strategy of the institution responsible for territorial coordination, which is then expressed in the various participating institutions.

### **Adapt to diverse configurations of territorial groupings**

The diversity of site configurations, operating modes and fields of activity require evaluation to be adapted to each of them, keeping in mind that they all develop differently. The goal is to prepare for and strengthen dialogue with the coordinating institutions and stakeholder institutions (definition of the scope, objectives, evaluation methods, gathering expectations and information on positioning, etc.) and increase dialogue with the supervising ministries.

### **Implement a new integrated evaluation process**

This will involve pursuing connections, complementarity and added value at each stage of evaluation, for each of the evaluation subjects. This work will result in the revision, adaptation and harmonisation of the various evaluation standards (for territorial coordination strategies, institutions, study programmes and research). HCERES evaluation processes will therefore be adapted accordingly. In each process, evaluation will have to assess how the territorial coordination strategy is taken into account in each of the stakeholder institutions and, in return, what each stakeholder contributes to the territorial coordination strategy, while retaining their autonomy.

### **Rely on the OST department to contribute to the reasoning behind evaluations**

OST will use its skills and outputs to contribute to these evaluations. At the scale of a region or grouping of large institutions, the scientific, technological and educational output indicators are fairly reliable for compiling information that is useful for all stakeholders. This information will support qualitative and collaborative evaluation by peers.



## OBJECTIVES FOR 2020

1. Strengthen dialogue with territorial coordinations prior to evaluation.
2. Develop evaluation processes (for study programmes, research, institutions and territorial coordinations) adapted to the integrated evaluation of sites.
3. Develop a robust integrated evaluation methodology that is compatible with the contract negotiation process.
4. Use OST scientific, technological and educational output indicators for evaluating territorial coordinations.



## ANNUAL MONITORING INDICATORS

1. Feedback.



## MILESTONES FOR 2016 - 2020

### 2016

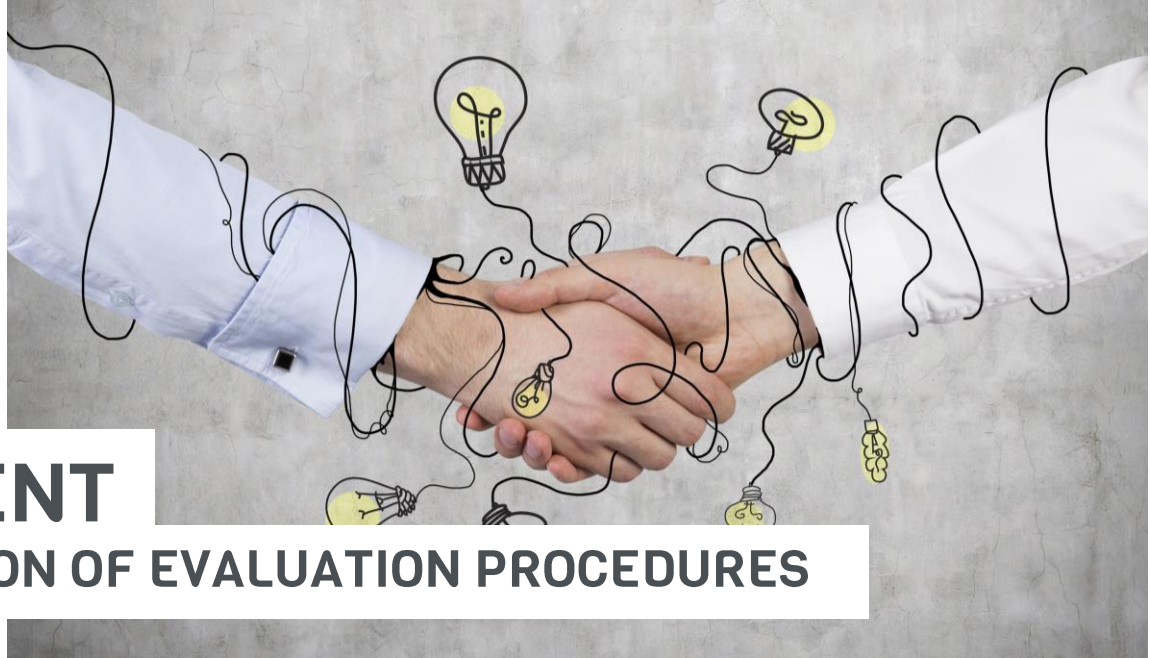
Creation of a dedicated evaluation of territorial coordinations department which will have all the resources required and coordinate the whole process.

### 2016

Implementation of a project-mode approach per site that incorporates all HCERES departments.

### 2016-2017

Development of various integrated evaluation variables.



# IMPLEMENT THE VALIDATION OF EVALUATION PROCEDURES

By law, HCERES has been given the task of validating the procedures for evaluations carried out by other bodies. Standards and procedures will need to be adopted that ensure equal treatment between the entities evaluated by HCERES and those evaluated by other bodies. This system will encourage the phasing of evaluations in order to maintain the current integrated evaluation process of the French system.

The founding texts of HCERES (act and decree) state in general terms that evaluations carried out by other bodies shall be subject to the same ethical and methodological requirements. The principles of objectivity, transparency and equal treatment for evaluated organisations are restated. The principles of neutrality, representation of themes and opinions apply to experts involved in evaluations. The requirement to comply with international best practice is also mentioned.

The decree specifies that the scope of evaluations must take into account the national and territorial aspects of higher education and research, in particular for territorial coordination and groupings, relationships between study programmes and research, the diversity of the type and mission of the organisations and

programmes evaluated and the diversity of disciplinary fields.

These texts do not require the evaluation procedures to be identical to those of HCERES, only that they share the same main ethical and methodological principles. Nevertheless, this high standard must be maintained over time.

It is important to identify the main aspects of the evaluation process for which HCERES may have expectations:

- the self-evaluation process carried out by the institution and expectations with regard to the self-evaluation report sent to the experts;
- rules for forming the panel of experts and checking for conflicts of interests;
- the external evaluation standards;
- the external evaluation procedure;
- expectations with regard to the external evaluation report;
- the external evaluation report publishing process.

For the evaluation of study programmes, the validation system must fully comply with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).



## OBJECTIVES FOR 2020

1. Develop robust validation procedures for the evaluation of study programmes, research units, institutions and territorial groupings.

## ANNUAL MONITORING INDICATORS

1. Adoption of systems and their revisions.
2. Number of procedures validated with regard to the number of procedures submitted.

## MILESTONES FOR 2016 - 2020

### **2016**

Adoption of the system for validating evaluation procedures for study programmes, research units and institutions.

### **2017**

Adoption of the system for validating evaluation procedures for territorial groupings.

### **2018-2020**

Annual revision of the four systems for validating evaluation procedures.

## AREA 6

# SIMPLIFY EVALUATION PROCESSES



The evaluation work carried out by HCERES has promoted the development of evaluation culture within higher education and research institutions.

Evaluation procedures now need to be simplified and reduced to give the scientific and teaching community time to focus on their main profession, and to ensure that the cyclical frequency of evaluations provides added value.

### **Simplify the evaluation of institutions and adapt to site specifics**

Increased autonomy for institutions and the variable levels of site coordination have led to a greater differentiation between the modernisation, governance and management processes of institutions. All institutions will be able to request adaptations to the depth of analyses by focusing evaluation on certain fields, with the aim of improving the added value for the institution.

Furthermore, two types of simplification are possible for institutions that are stakeholders in site policies or signatories of multi-annual site contracts:

- simplification via prior evaluation of the site policy: activities that fall under the territorial grouping will no longer be evaluated for each institution;
- simplification via the simultaneous evaluation of institutions, programmes and research: the evaluation will focus on the strategy drawn up and rolled out by the institution in its various fields of activity, and on the management of continuous improvement mechanisms for its activities, rather than on their results.

For site policy evaluations, the scope and competencies of territorial grouping lead institutions are not fully consistent, so this will involve adapting existing standards to the specific situations and coordinating them as best as possible with the standards for the evaluation of institutions, study programmes and research, as part of integrated evaluation.

### **Simplify the evaluation of study programmes**

The HCERES evaluation process for study programmes has taken into account the changes to the dialogue between the State and higher education institutions brought about by the French Act of 22 July 2013, with the notion of prior accreditation of institutions following the *ex-post* evaluation of programmes. In order to avoid the submission of two files (one for evaluation and one for accreditation), HCERES will extend its evaluation to include the planned programmes of institutions. The Ministry will make its decision on the basis of an overall opinion issued by HCERES, based on a single file (review/project sent to HCERES). This single file will greatly simplify coordination between evaluation and contract negotiation.

Choices still need to be made between a narrow-scale evaluation for each study programme and a wider-scale evaluation (for departments, disciplines, institutions and/or sites). One possibility for simplification would involve adapting the scale of the evaluation according to the site specifics or evaluation theme. Each programme still needs to be evaluated for specific themes like health programmes, paramedical training, schools under the responsibility of the French Ministry of Culture, and schools of teaching and education (ESPE), etc., but

the evaluation of the study programme offering for university sites has greater added value. This will make assessment of training fields (coherent sets of programmes) for institutions and sites the most detailed level of evaluation and greatly simplify institution files.

### **Simplify the evaluation of research units**

The evaluation of research units needs to change in order to adapt both to changes to the evaluation of programmes and to the development of site policy evaluation as part of territorial groupings. The aim of HCERES is, firstly, to simplify the “narrow-scale” evaluation of research units, while at the same time

maintaining it, as it provides the internal evaluation bodies of research bodies with vital information when accrediting mixed research units; and secondly, to associate this narrow-scale evaluation with wider-scale evaluation for research fields (i.e. disciplinary or thematic groupings on a site). This should introduce a more strategic dimension into the evaluation of research organisations.

The aim will be to define a new evaluation process for research units (reduced number of criteria, etc.) and to specify the content of the evaluation of research fields with all stakeholders.



## **OBJECTIVES FOR 2020**

1. Develop simplified evaluation procedures
2. Revise and implement a new evaluation process for research units and study programmes in consultation with stakeholders.



## **ANNUAL MONITORING INDICATORS**

1. List of simplifications.



## **MILESTONES FOR 2016 - 2020**

### **2016-2020**

Systematic presentation of simplification measures for each annual revision of evaluation methodologies.

### **2016-2020**

Ownership of simplified measures by stakeholders.

## AREA 7

# RAISE THE EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL PROFILE OF HCERES

HCERES has consolidated its international evaluation methods and practices and strengthened its European base by actively participating in European quality assurance agency networks.

It is already a committed national player thanks to its proposals for the revision of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and for defining the French objectives of the Bologna Secretariat.

The goal is to consolidate its achievements.

### **Establish HCERES as a top French player internationally**

HCERES will strengthen its presence on the European and international stage by developing actions, discussion and collaborations with other French and foreign agencies and players in higher education, quality assurance and evaluation.

### **Develop evaluation and accreditation missions at both European and international level**

Given that HCERES is now identified on the international scene as a known and recognised player in study programme evaluation and that foreign institutions have clearly expressed the fact that the “values / qualities” of French higher education are ones that they would like to promote, HCERES will consolidate its evaluation and accreditation processes abroad and continue its international actions.

### **Become a reference in analysis, discussion, summary reports and forecasting for opening French higher education and research up internationally**

Within the scope of its competencies, HCERES will contribute to the organisation of European and international benchmark activities and will support other agencies in their own improvement processes.





## OBJECTIVES FOR 2020

1. Participate actively in ENQA and ECA network working groups and join their management bodies.
2. Promote and actively contribute to the French-speaking network, FRAQ-SUP.
3. Deepen relationships with European evaluation agencies through joint evaluation missions, sharing pools of experts, joint training sessions for experts and agency staff, etc.
4. Strengthen dialogue with institutions and the ministries of higher education and foreign affairs to discuss national priorities and promote the French evaluation model.
5. Develop evaluation and accreditation activities for foreign, French abroad or joint French-foreign programmes, research organisations and institutions, in partnership with another European agency or local agencies.
6. Work on ensuring the quality of French study programmes abroad in line with the European project, QACHE (Quality Assurance for Cross-Border Higher Education).
7. Succeed in increasing benchmark and "information watchdog" activities abroad and promote their dissemination within HCERES.



## ANNUAL MONITORING INDICATORS

1. Number of European projects submitted each year.
2. Number of evaluations and accreditations conducted abroad.
3. Number of joint evaluation missions with European evaluation agencies.
4. Number of institutions awarded the CEQUINT label.
5. Number of international best practice documents.



## MILESTONES FOR 2016 - 2020

### 2016

Definition of working methods and criteria for evaluating the international nature of programmes and institutions by the accreditation committee.

### 2017

Definition of an evaluation methodology for bi-national universities and French programmes abroad.

### 2017

Roll-out of the CEQUINT label in collaboration with the CTI.

### 2017-2019

Annual submission of European projects.

### 2017-2018

Contribution to the preparation of the Bologna Process Ministerial Conference in 2018.

### 2016-2020

Performance of at least three evaluations abroad each year.

### 2016-2020

Annual dissemination of international best practice (internal conferences, documentation, thematic contribution to the internal letter).

## AREA 8

# FULLY UTILISE THE SKILLS OF OST



Incorporating and strengthening OST as an HCERES department will boost the influence, profile and security of activities.

Three priorities for action are proposed:

- performing and disseminating quantitative studies and analyses of the research system and its momentum to public and private decision-makers, the media, the general public, etc.;
- taking part in integrated site evaluation work so that the reviewers and evaluated parties can base their activities on a set of shared indicators and analyses as part of a methodological system that ensures

stringent ethical standards in the use of these indicators for evaluation;

- performing a pilot study programme for the development and implementation of indicators and analyses in order to better meet the needs of players.

The success of these actions assumes that the contributions and recommendations of the OST Scientific Steering Committee (COS) can be taken into account in HCERES governance so that operation of OST is efficiently coordinated with that of the other departments.



## OBJECTIVES FOR 2020

1. Make OST a recognised reference resource for its studies and quantitative analyses.
2. Fully integrate the use of OST indicators by institutions and other HCERES departments for evaluations of territorial groupings.
3. Provide state-of-the art studies and analyses in scientometrics and research policies.
4. Utilise the skills of the OST in support of the assessments performed by experts.



## ANNUAL MONITORING INDICATORS

1. At least 90% of working programme studies are completed and delivered (or distributed) within the deadlines set.
2. The number of times studies and reports are downloaded from the website is regularly increasing.
3. At least half the institutional coordinations subject to an evaluation consider that the OST indicators have been useful to them. This percentage increases year on year.



## MILESTONES FOR 2016 - 2020

### 2016

A multi-year programme of studies will be set with the COS. The programme will include thematic studies for site evaluations and pilot studies for the use of new indicators.

### 2017

The first web pages with OST studies and analyses will be available on the HCERES website. Procedures for using indicators in site evaluations will be presented to all stakeholders.

### 2017-2020

Thematic studies and other studies with high added value such as network analyses and international positioning analyses will have been published in accordance with the programme set with the COS.

### 2018-2020

OST will take part in at least two European projects involving reference players in the field. It will collaborate on research projects with applications of interest for future studies.

## AREA 9



# IMPLEMENT AN INTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE ADAPTED TO INTEGRATED EVALUATION

A new internal HCERES organisational structure will be introduced in line with the development of integrated evaluation for sites and in order to increase the visibility and understanding of HCERES for our external partners. This will take the form of a matrix-type organisation, combining departments and a project-based mode. The challenge is to coordinate the evaluation of site policies, harmonise evaluation standards, coordinate

the production of summary reports or the production of indicators defined and produced by OST, implement a continuous improvement policy for processes (feedback, risk management), and multi-annual plans for recruiting and supporting experts. To this end, the IT system and internal quality assurance will also be strengthened.



## OBJECTIVES FOR 2020

1. Develop an effective structure in line with integrated evaluation processes.
2. Develop the resources required for conducting integrated evaluation.
3. Set up a consistent information system in support of all HCERES missions and an internal quality assurance system across all departments.



## ANNUAL MONITORING INDICATORS

1. Number of inter-departmental procedures implemented.



## MILESTONES FOR 2016 - 2020

### 2016

New organisational structure in place.

### 2017-2020

The information system will support integrated evaluation and the production of summaries.



## Extract from the legal text pertaining to HCERES

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The missions entrusted to HCERES by the French Act dated 22 July 2013 pertaining to higher education and research.

1° Evaluate the higher education institutions and their groupings, defined in Article L.718-3 of the French Education code, research bodies, scientific cooperation foundations and the French National Research Agency, or, where applicable, ensure the quality of evaluations carried out by other bodies;

2° Evaluate research units at the request of the supervising institution, in the absence of validation of evaluation procedures or in the absence of a decision by the supervising institution to use another evaluation body or, where applicable, validate the procedures of other bodies for evaluating research units. If a unit is supervised by more than one institution, only one evaluation shall be carried out. If institutions jointly decide to use another evaluation body, HCERES shall validate the evaluation procedures used by this body. In the absence of a joint decision by the institutions to use another body, or in the event that the evaluation procedures are not validated, HCERES shall evaluate the research unit;

3° Evaluate the programmes and degrees offered by higher education institutions or, where applicable, validate evaluation procedures developed by other bodies. When an application is submitted for programme accreditation as per Article L. 613-1 of the French Education Code, evaluations must be carried out prior to accreditation or renewal. HCERES shall ensure that the programme complies with the national framework for study programmes and that there is effective student participation in evaluating teaching;

4° Ensure that all missions defined by law and the specific status of higher education and research personnel is taken into account in their evaluations. Missions performed under the systems set out in Chapter III of Title I of Book IV of this code shall be included in this evaluation;

5° Ensure that activities relating to the dissemination of scientific, technical and industrial culture are properly taken into account in the career progression of higher education and research personnel;

6° Conduct *ex-post* evaluation of investment programmes and private organisations receiving public funding for research or higher education. It may also take part in evaluations of foreign or international research and higher education organisations, as part of European or international cooperation programmes or at the request of the competent authorities.

## Evaluations (annual averages)

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- 50** Higher education institutions or research bodies
- 630** Research entities
- 600** Bachelor's degrees
- 300** Master's degrees
- 70** Doctoral schools

## Resources used

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- 4000** Experts used each year, 20% of whom are from outside France
- 110** Administrative staff
- 115** Scientific delegates, working part-time



