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# Institutional accreditation Les Roches Global Hospitality Education

External assessment report | 5 November 2024



## **Content:**

**Section A** – Decision of the Swiss Accreditation Council

**Section B** – Proposal of the agency

**Section C** – Expert report

**Section D** – Position statement of the Les Roches Global Hospitality Education



## **Section A**

# **Decision of the Swiss Accreditation Council**

20 September 2024





The Swiss Accreditation Council publishes its positive accreditation decisions:  
<https://akkreditierungsrat.ch/en/decisions/>



## **Section B**

### **Proposal of the agency**

7 June 2024





## Table of content

Preliminary remarks .....	1
1 Les Roches Global Hospitality Education .....	1
2 Legal basis .....	2
3 Facts .....	2
4 Considerations .....	3
4.1 Assessment and accreditation recommendation by the group of experts.....	3
4.2 Appraisal of the assessment and accreditation proposal by the group of experts .....	7
5 Accreditation proposal .....	7

## Preliminary remarks

### *Purpose and object of institutional accreditation*

The process of institutional accreditation pursuant to the HEdA provides Switzerland with an instrument to control access to its higher education landscape. Institutional accreditation assesses the quality assurance systems of higher education institutions; through these systems, higher education institutions guarantee the quality of their teaching, research and services.

The quality assurance system is evaluated by external experts, who review the concepts and mechanisms of quality assurance and quality enhancement against quality standards. They assess whether the various elements of the system form a fully consistent and coherent whole that enables the higher education institution to ensure the quality and continuous improvement of its activities in accordance with its type and specific characteristics. The relationship between the resources used and the results achieved are also taken into account. A review of the whole system every seven years allows the higher education institution (HEI) to regularly assess the state of development and the coherence of the various elements.

### *Proposal by the agency*

The institutional accreditation procedure is designed as a “peer review” process. Each report by a group of experts therefore represents a snapshot of a specific higher education institution. Accordingly, the reports by the groups of experts are not suitable for drawing comparisons between higher education institutions. The accreditation decisions, on the other hand, must be consistent: the same findings must lead to the same decisions.

In its proposal, the agency verifies whether the deliberations of the group of experts is coherent, i.e. related to the standard and evidence-based, and consistent with previous processes.

AAQ does not comment on the recommendations of the group of experts and accepts these as part of the review process. The recommendations are presented by the group of experts as suggestions to promote quality enhancement, and the HEI is free to interpret how these might be implemented across the institution. AAQ attributes high importance to the way in which an HEI addresses recommendations following a review process and will seek evidence of good practice in future self-assessment reports. However, the recommendations are not legally binding and do not have to be implemented.

## 1 Les Roches Global Hospitality Education

Les Roches Global Hospitality Education (hereafter Les Roches) is a higher education institution specialising in hospitality management education with two campuses, in Crans Montana, Switzerland and in Marbella, Spain.

Les Roches began as a small private international high school based in Bluche, Switzerland, and for over fifty years was under the same private owner before being acquired – first by Laureate Education (a US company) in 2000 and then by Eurazeo, a publicly listed French investment corporation, through Sommet Education in 2016 (a hospitality education group based in Switzerland, which supports Les Roches as parent company).

The institution was initially established to offer undergraduate programmes, and the Bachelor of Business Administration continues to be the largest programme that it offers. Les Roches began to explore offering postgraduate programmes in the early 2000s, first with a Master of Business

Administration in partnership with the Universidad European de Madrid (Spain) before launching its own MBA programme in 2010. Three new graduate and continuing education programmes, one in Crans Montana and two in Marbella, were launched in 2020, strengthening Les Roches' reputation as a provider of graduate education. In 2022, distance education was added to the portfolio of Les Roches programmes with the launch of the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA), a hybrid part-time programme for hospitality professionals.

The design of programmes at the institution is enriched through collaboration with academics in other institutions and the wider hospitality and tourism industry. The establishment of the Les Roches Spark Innovation Sphere in 2021 has provided a designated hub to support these initiatives and strengthen links with the industry.

Les Roches currently has a total of 1,405 students studying in a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes and other qualifications across its residential campuses, and a further 579 students undertaking work integrated learning internship placements. Les Roches currently employs 269 faculty and staff.

## 2 Legal basis

- *Federal Act of 30 September 2011 on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (Higher Education Act, HEdA), SR 414.20;*
- *Ordinance of the Higher Education Council of 28 May 2015 on Accreditation in Higher Education (Accreditation Ordinance HEdA), SR 414.205.3;*
- *Ordinance of the Higher Education Council of 29 November on the Coordination of Teaching at Swiss Universities, SR 414.205.1;*
- *Ordinance of the Higher Education Council of 20 May 2021 on Admission to the Universities of Applied Sciences and the Institutes of the Universities of Applied Sciences (Admission Ordinance UAS), SR 414.205.7.*

## 3 Facts

Les Roches applied for institutional accreditation as a Swiss University Institute of Applied Sciences pursuant to Art. 8 para. 1 of the Accreditation Ordinance on 23 January 2023.

The HEI chose the Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ) as its accreditation agency.

Les Roches chose English as the language through which the procedure would be conducted, in accordance with Art. 9 para. 7 of the Accreditation Ordinance. Both the self-assessment report (SAR) and the report by the group of peer experts were to be written in English. The national language chosen for the official administrative part of the process is French.

On 24 March 2023, the Accreditation Council decided to accept the application of Les Roches on the basis of Art. 4 para. 2 of the Accreditation Ordinance and forwarded the application documents to AAQ.

AAQ opened the proceedings on 6 June 2023.

On 15 November 2023, AAQ informed Les Roches of the composition of the group of experts, which comprised the following (in alphabetical order):

- Prof. Patric Arn, Director of Studies BA Tourism, Fachhochschule Graubünden



- Krumma Jonsdottir, Founder of "Positive Performances", Reykjavik (Iceland), chairperson
- Prof. Anand Narasimhan, Shell Professor of Global Leadership and Dean of Research, IMD
- Yukari Iguchi FIH SFHEA, Academic Lead for Hospitality and Business, University of Derby (UK)
- Nils Winterhalter, Master's student in Business and Economics, Universität Zürich

On the basis of the self-assessment report (SAR) of 15 November 2023 and the on-site visit of 12 and 13 March 2024 (which was preceded by a preliminary visit on 13 February 2024), the group of experts considered whether the accreditation requirements pursuant to Art. 30 HEdA were fulfilled and recorded their conclusions in a report.

Based on the documents relevant to the procedure – in particular, the SAR and the preliminary report of the expert peer group – AAQ formulated the draft accreditation application and submitted the expert peer group's report and the agency's proposal to Les Roches for comment on 7 June 2024.

AAQ received the comments of Les Roches on the group of experts' report and AAQ's accreditation proposal on 5 July 2024.

On 11 July 2024, AAQ proposed to the Accreditation Council that Les Roches be accredited as a "Swiss University Institute of Applied Sciences".

## 4 Considerations

### 4.1 Assessment and accreditation recommendation by the group of experts

In its final presentation of the strengths and challenges of the institution's quality assurance system and in its overall assessment, the group of experts highlights a number of positive elements: a solid reputation both, nationally and internationally, that continues to attract a diverse student population; a strong brand quality both in the programmes and the graduates; a modern and diverse student experience; faculty expertise; and a commitment to strong programme development.

At the same time the group of experts points out a number of notable challenges: the complexity and incompleteness of the quality assurance system; some concern regarding the economic sustainability of the changing business model with a shift in focus from undergraduate to postgraduate education; research which still depends on visiting faculty; inadequate diversity among stakeholders and a greater need and awareness for including representative groups across committees; insufficient level of gender diversity across committee structures; lack of promotion of equal opportunities and gender equality; and appropriate institutional approaches to professional development.

Overall, in its analyses and evaluation, the group of experts concludes that Les Roches has a quality assurance system that covers all the areas and processes required of a higher education institution. Consequently, the group of experts considers the central requirement for institutional accreditation pursuant to Article 30 HEdA to have been met.

Based on its analysis the group of experts sees the need for corrections to be effected in the following areas:

- Quality assurance system (Art. 30 para. 1. let. a; standards 1.2 and 2.1)

- Participation (Art. 30 para. 1. let. a num. 4; standard 2.3)
- Equal opportunities and true gender equality (Art. 30 para. 1. let. a num. 5, standard 2.5)
- Teaching and research (Art. 30 para. 1 let. a num. 1; standards 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4)
- Promotion of faculty members (Art. 30 para. 1 let. a num. 1; standard 4.3)

Consequently, the group of experts recommends eight conditions:

In its analysis of standard 1.2, the group of experts concludes that where Les Roches has a process of regular reporting or a feedback system in place, it was easier to identify the necessary adjustments. However, this process does not yet cover all institutional activities. Based on this analysis the group of experts assess standard 1.2 as being “partially fulfilled” and formulates the following condition:

Condition 1 (regarding standard 1.2):

Les Roches must redefine its quality assurance system so that it takes account of all the institution's activities specific to its type and thus fully supports the realisation of its mandate by setting SMART KPIs.

In its analysis of standard 2.1, the group of experts notes that the structure of the quality assurance system is complex. It is acknowledged that recent developments have contributed to greater oversight, management and leadership of the quality assurance system with the support of the Governing Board, yet some decision-making processes would benefit from further development and articulation. As an example, the group of experts points out that the criteria used for evaluating performance are reliant on student feedback and satisfaction, but it is not always clear how a student should be defined – as a “client” of the institution or as a “product” for the industry. Based on this analysis the group of experts assess standard 2.1 as being “partially fulfilled” and formulates the following condition:

Condition 2 (regarding standard 2.1):

Les Roches must simplify the organisational structure of its quality assurance system so that processes are explicit and the institution can evaluate the performance of its goals and achieve its strategic objectives.

In its analysis of standard 2.3, the group of experts notes that there is still scope to further diversify committees by including one or two members that would offer more specific representation of the communities of practice, e.g. the inclusion of a student representative and/or other stakeholder representatives that can offer comparable experiences reflective of those at Les Roches' campuses in Marbella and Crans Montana and can play a direct role in the institution's strategic decision-making processes. Furthermore, the group of experts questions the role and direct contribution of visiting faculty on the Faculty Council. It was noted that visiting faculty do not currently have a defined role in institutional decision-making and that there is no formal process by which they can contribute to this process. While they are actively encouraged to participate in discussions at the school level and to contribute feedback on the specific subjects/programmes in which they teach, their feedback is not formally represented or reported to the Governing Board. The group of experts considered that given the high proportion of visiting faculty in Les Roches, this is a considerable oversight and an area that Les Roches should consider a priority. Based on this analysis the group of experts assesses standard 2.3 as being “partially fulfilled” and formulates the following condition:

Condition 3 (regarding standard 2.3):

Les Roches must draw up participation rules to cover all its representative groups (including visiting faculty) on the various committees and ensure measurable diversity of representation on its Governing Board.

In its analysis of standard 2.5, the group of experts notes that the gender ratio of staff in the institution is currently 60:40, with more women than men working in the industry across a range of roles, including management. However, parity in pay is still not realised and the committee structures often do not reflect the 60:40 ratio in diversity. For example, the Governing Board has a ratio of 70% men to 30% women. While the group of experts commends a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and bullying, they noted that where cases of alleged discrimination had occurred, the formal approach and procedures were less clear to students. Based on this analysis the group of experts assesses standard 2.5 as being “partially fulfilled” and formulates the following condition:

Condition 4 (regarding standard 2.5):

Les Roches must establish a clear policy for promoting equal opportunities and actual gender equality, define precise objectives in this area and an action plan for achieving them. The institution must also ensure that this policy is communicated and understood by employees and students of both campuses.

In its analysis of standard 3.1, the group of experts commends Les Roches for the innovations that Spark Innovation Sphere has brought about to support student learning and develop skills in applied research in the hospitality industry. However, the group of experts also notes that while this research and innovation hub provides a platform by which research and innovation can be interwoven alongside the programmes which are taught, it does not directly support the development of faculty members in growing a strong, peer-reviewed research portfolio. The group of experts further notes that the quality assurance process for research is focussed predominantly on institutional procedures for research integrity and ethics. The group of experts is concerned that there is not a clear delineation between the applied research undertaken by students and the faculty-led research with clear objectives, actions and KPIs to track and monitor its trajectory. Based on this analysis the group of experts assesses standard 3.1 as being “partially fulfilled” and formulates the following condition:

Condition 5 (regarding standard 3.1):

Les Roches must establish a strategy and action plan to ensure that the institution continues to develop its own research, integrating the increase in the number of its own researchers and incorporating a significant amount of peer-reviewed research.

In its analysis of standard 3.2, the group of experts concludes that Les Roches has a detailed governance structure that oversees periodic review of internal programmes and involves a range of committees. However, in the peer review system used to evaluate teaching, there does not appear to be a formal, central communication channel in which feedback is shared with all constituent stakeholders. For the evaluation of research, the group of experts notes that there is a system in place to compile the outputs related to student-led applied research. While this forms a useful repository and is aligned with the strategy, the group of experts consider it imperative that Les Roches provide support and an appropriate environment for faculty to continue to build an institutional research portfolio separate to student-led applied research (see standard 3.1). Based on this analysis, the group of experts assesses standard 3.1 as being “partially fulfilled” and formulates the following condition:

Condition 6 (regarding standard 3.2):

Les Roches must put in place a holistic system for evaluating its activities, in particular for teaching and research activities.

In its analysis of standard 3.4, the group of experts notes Les Roches' statement under the institution's admission requirements that "prospective students should acquaint themselves with some aspect of the hospitality business". However, the practical year is in fact mandatory under the HEdA (Ch. 4, Art. 25). As such, the experts require that these elements be included and communicated to future students and all stakeholders through the Les Roches website, published materials and all other forms of public communication. Furthermore, the group of experts notes that the Bachelor of Business Administration in Global Hospitality Management was upgraded to a bachelor's degree programme following the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). However, the number of ECTS credits awarded for the Bachelor's degree differs from one document to another. This variation in credit volume together with the naming convention used for the Bachelor's degree shows that Les Roches has not yet finished adapting its diplomas to meet the requirements of the HEdA and its Accreditation Ordinance. The experts require that (i) Les Roches adapts its diplomas to meet the legal requirements for accreditation and (ii) all degree titles going forward must conform with the naming conventions of "Bachelor of Science" and "Master of Science", in accordance with the HEdA Accreditation Ordinance for the Swiss qualification framework. The institution must also undertake to communicate these updates to all prospective students and stakeholders. Based on this analysis the group of experts assesses standard 3.4 as being "partially fulfilled" and formulates the following condition:

Condition 7 (regarding standard 3.4):

Les Roches must modify its diplomas (to include the appropriate title and correct number of ECTS credits) and admission requirements so that they scrupulously comply with the HEdA (Ch. 4, Art. 25) and its Accreditation Ordinance (Section 1, Art. 2 and Section 2, Art. 4). These changes must be clearly communicated to prospective students and all stakeholders through the institution's website, published materials and all other forms of public communication.

In its analysis of standard 4.3, the group of experts acknowledges the strong commitment of Les Roches to the professional development of staff, but they question whether there are specific institutional approaches for the development of staff at various points in their career. Faculty members confirmed that as part of the annual individual talent performance review process, staff can submit a request to be considered for promotion. While it was unclear to the experts what the criteria are, it was confirmed to the group that academic promotions are reliant on a strong portfolio of independent research (but with no specific number of peer-reviewed publications stated), expertise in teaching and programme development and a proven track record in student engagement. Based on this analysis the group of experts assesses standard 4.3 as being "partially fulfilled" and formulates the following condition:

Condition 8 (regarding standard 4.3):

Les Roches must establish promotion criteria for all its staff, and in particular for the new generation of scientists, as well as an action plan to enable promotions to be assessed objectively. These criteria should be communicated in a targeted manner.

## 4.2 Appraisal of the assessment and accreditation proposal by the group of experts

AAQ states that the group of experts has reviewed all standards.

AAQ judges the assessment of the group of experts and the conclusions drawn to be conclusive and coherently derived from the standards. AAQ accepts the conditions as wholly appropriate in identifying the areas for improvement in the development of the quality assurance system.

AAQ supports the proposal of the group of experts to allow Les Roches a period of 24 months to fulfil the imposed conditions. Given the range of standards concerned, AAQ believes a site visit of one full day with 3 experts is appropriate.

## 5 Accreditation proposal

AAQ states that Les Roches meets the requirements of Article 30 HEa for institutional accreditation as a University of Applied Sciences Institute:

– *Article 30 para. 1 let. a and c*

The group of experts' analysis of the standards in relation to the Accreditation Ordinance shows that Les Roches fulfils the requirements according to let. a num. 1–7 as well as let. c, or will have fulfilled them after fulfilling the conditions.

– *Article 30 para. 1 let. b*

As Les Roches applied for accreditation as a University of Applied Sciences Institute, this requirement is not applicable.

Based on the self-assessment report of Les Roches, the analysis in the report of the group of experts, the accreditation proposal of the group of experts and the position statement of Les Roches, AAQ proposes that accreditation be granted to Les Roches as a University of Applied Sciences Institute with eight conditions:

### Condition 1 (regarding standard 1.2):

Les Roches must redefine its quality assurance system so that it takes account of all the institution's activities specific to its type and thus fully supports the realisation of its mandate by setting SMART KPIs.

### Condition 2 (regarding standard 2.1):

Les Roches must simplify the organisational structure of its quality assurance system so that processes are explicit and the institution can evaluate the performance of its goals and achieve its strategic objectives.

### Condition 3 (regarding standard 2.3):

Les Roches must draw up participation rules to cover all its representative groups (including visiting faculty) on the various committees and ensure measurable diversity of representation on its Governing Board.

### Condition 4 (regarding standard 2.5):

Les Roches must establish a clear policy for promoting equal opportunities and actual gender equality, define precise objectives in this area and an action plan for achieving them.

The institution must also ensure that this policy is communicated and understood by employees and students of both campuses.

Condition 5 (regarding standard 3.1):

Les Roches must establish a strategy and action plan to ensure that the institution continues to develop its own research, integrating the increase in the number of its own researchers and incorporating a significant amount of peer-reviewed research.

Condition 6 (regarding standard 3.2):

Les Roches must put in place a holistic system for evaluating its activities, in particular for teaching and research activities.

Condition 7 (regarding standard 3.4):

Les Roches must modify its diplomas (to include the appropriate title and correct number of ECTS credits) and admission requirements so that they scrupulously comply with the HEdA (Ch. 4, Art. 25) and its Accreditation Ordinance (Section 1, Art. 2 and Section 2, Art. 4). These changes must be clearly communicated to prospective students and all stakeholders through the institution's website, published materials and all other forms of public communication.

Condition 8 (regarding standard 4.3):

Les Roches must establish promotion criteria for all its staff, and in particular for the new generation of scientists, as well as an action plan to enable promotions to be assessed objectively. These criteria should be communicated in a targeted manner.

AAQ proposes a period of 24 months for the fulfilment of the conditions.

AAQ proposes a review of the conditions with three experts during a one-day site visit.



# Section C

## Expert report

29 May 2024





## Table of contents

1	Les Roches Global Hospitality Education: Brief description .....	1
2	Analysis of follow-up on the results of previous procedures .....	1
3	Quality assurance system of the Les Roches Global Hospitality Education.....	2
4	Analysis of compliance with the quality standards .....	4
5	Outline of the strengths and challenges of the system and its overall assessment.....	27
6	Recommendations for the future development of quality assurance .....	29
7	Accreditation proposal of the group of experts .....	31



## 1 Les Roches Global Hospitality Education: Brief description

Les Roches Global Hospitality Education (hereafter Les Roches) is a globally recognised multicultural higher education institution (HEI) which specialises in hospitality management education and has two campuses, in Crans Montana, Switzerland and in Marbella, Spain.

Les Roches began as a small private international high school based in Bluche, Switzerland, and for over fifty years was under the same private owner before being acquired – first by Laureate Education (a US company) in 2000 and then by Eurazeo, a publicly listed French investment corporation, through Sommet Education in 2016 (a hospitality education group based in Switzerland, which supports Les Roches as parent company). Over its almost seventy-year history, Les Roches has placed quality as a core attribute and goal at the heart of the educational programmes that it delivers. The HEI takes pride in the quality of its degrees, which are globally accredited and regularly sought after within the hospitality industry. To this end, Les Roches currently reports a 98% employment rate of its graduates and assures prospective students of an “educational environment that fosters authenticity, kindness, and passion”.<sup>1</sup>

The institution was initially established to offer undergraduate programmes, and the Bachelor of Business Administration continues to be the largest programme that it offers. Les Roches began to explore offering postgraduate programmes in the early 2000s, first with a Master of Business Administration in partnership with the Universidad Europea de Madrid (Spain) before launching its own MBA programme in 2010. Three new graduate and continuing education programmes, one in Crans Montana and two in Marbella, were launched in 2020, strengthening Les Roches’ reputation as a provider of graduate education. In 2022, distance education was added to the portfolio of Les Roches programmes with the launch of the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA), a hybrid part-time programme for hospitality professionals.

The design of programmes at the institution is enriched through collaborations with academics in other institutions and the wider hospitality and tourism industry. The establishment of the Les Roches Spark Innovation Sphere in 2021 has provided a designated hub to support these initiatives and strengthen links with the industry.

Les Roches currently has a total of 1,405 students studying in a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes and other qualifications across its residential campuses, and a further 579 students undertaking work integrated learning internship placements. Les Roches currently employs 269 faculty and staff.

## 2 Analysis of follow-up on the results of previous procedures

This is the first application by Les Roches for Swiss institutional accreditation; the self-assessment report (SAR) provides a detailed account of the quality standards set out by the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ). Les Roches is applying for University of Applied Sciences Institute status on the basis of its key mission being to foster a cosmopolitan learning community in which to develop future leaders in the global hospitality sector, with the ability and confidence to shape a sustainable future. It is considered that this corresponds with the vocational and workplace orientation of a University of Applied Sciences regarding the size and well-established disciplinary scope of the institution.

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<sup>1</sup> See the "Mission and Governance" page on the Les Roches website. URL: <https://lesroches.edu/meet-les-roches/mission-and-governance/>

However, institutional accreditation is not the only external evaluation that Les Roches has undergone in recent years. The following is a chronology of other accreditations granted to Les Roches:

- 1991 – the **Commission on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI)** granted US and American regional accreditation
- 2002 – the **Canton of Valais, Switzerland** granted approval to offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes as an institution of higher education
- 2005 – the **New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE)** granted institutional accreditation
- 2019 – (under a new name) the **New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)** renewed the institutional accreditation for a ten-year period
- 2021 – the **NECHE** granted approval for the establishment of academic programming offered through distance education

The accreditations which Les Roches has earned enables it to monitor the institution's development and meet the demands of an ever-changing world; for example, the growing demand for distance education prompted the institution to have its online programmes accredited by NECHE.

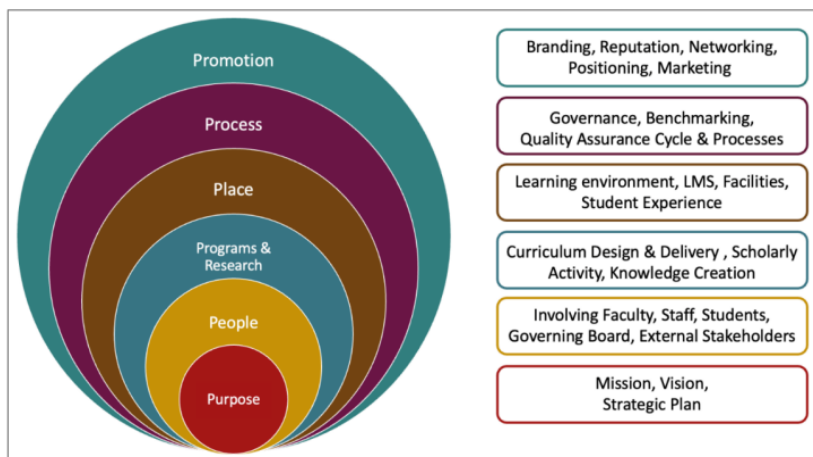
### 3 Quality assurance system of Les Roches Global Hospitality Education

Les Roches has a defined quality assurance system, the core elements of which are set out in its "Quality Assurance Policy" (QAP), which demonstrates how quality assurance is embedded within the institution's strategy. Based on a defined set of principles adapted to facilitate the institution in delivering on its vision and mission, these are presented in the QAP as follows:

1. Quality as excellence – refers to quality as aspiring to the highest standards in both the academic and non-academic student experience
2. Quality as consistency – views quality as a process to eliminate defects, aiming for a consistent and flawless outcome
3. Quality as fitness for purpose – measures quality by the level of fulfilment of a stated purpose, mission or strategic plan
4. Quality as value – maintains that quality is attained when a better or higher outcome can be achieved at the same cost, or if the cost can be decreased while the outcome level is maintained
5. Quality as transformation – looks at learning that is centred on the student and views quality as the value-added transformation and empowerment of a student through the learning process
6. Quality as compliance – considers quality as adhering to standards of accreditation
7. Quality as sustainability – regards quality from an Environmental Social Governance (ESG) perspective
8. Quality as inclusivity – involves all institutional stakeholders in ensuring quality.

Les Roches' quality assurance system is based on a holistic quality framework that incorporates a six-point methodology approach to quality management (see "Les Roches Quality Framework" below). The aim of this approach is to support the quality control mechanisms in place and to help the institution fulfil its mission. This policy underpins the tangible aspects of quality in the institution through the processes and procedures in place and comprises reporting mechanisms related to objectives and KPIs. Operational processes and KPIs specific to individual departments and functions ensure that measures for assuring quality are present and constantly evolve, at both the local and institutional levels.

Les Roches Quality Framework



Quality assurance falls under the remit of the Management Committee and has a designated head of function to lead the overall management of the processes and procedures in place. It follows a well-understood cyclical review process, referred to as the Plan, Implement, Evaluate, Review (PIER) process (see "Les Roches Quality Assurance Cycle (PIER)" below) and is applied to all quality processes across the institution.

Les Roches Quality Assurance Cycle (PIER)



## 4 Analysis of compliance with the quality standards

### Area 1: Quality assurance strategy

Standard 1.1: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall define its quality assurance strategy. This strategy shall contain the essential elements of an internal quality assurance system aimed at ensuring the quality of the activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and their long-term quality development as well as promoting the development of a quality culture.

Les Roches has a quality system and culture that is still at an early stage of development, but which seem to be taking root in the institution more and more each day. The quality assurance strategy at Les Roches 2024–28 is supported by a policy developed in 2022 through a consultative process with key stakeholders and underpinned by eight defined principles (listed in section 3). These eight principles are sourced from the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (HEdA).

The core function of Les Roches' quality framework is to ensure that its vision – to “create an inspiring and enabling educational environment” – and mission – to “deliver transformative education that combines high quality, research-led academic learning with real-world hospitality industry exposure”<sup>2</sup> – are realised through strategic planning and priorities. The quality framework incorporates external and internal processes that are well embedded in the institution. They provide the structure to support the quality culture of the institution and are aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

Indeed, the experts remarked that Les Roches has developed a culture of quality that is alive and well within the institution. The responsibility taken by constituent stakeholders to ensure that quality processes are effective and fit for purpose demonstrates a strong commitment to enhancing the quality culture.

The on-site visit enabled the group of experts to confirm that many of the core components of a functioning quality system are in place. However, some of them are not incorporated explicitly in a policy or aligned with the quality assurance strategy. Although the development of the QAP allowed Les Roches to measure the effectiveness of a range of institutional processes and to identify gaps through the systematic documentation of quality assurance practice in place, the experts considered that, despite examples of clear actions taken, not all the institution's activities yet benefit from comprehensive quality processes, whether in teaching, research or diversity and equality (see specific standards below).

The institution has acknowledged that the policy's development brought to light some gaps and plans to review its policy in 2025. The group of experts questioned the three-year delay, but this was considered a necessary timeframe by Les Roches to allow the previously implemented changes to become embedded before their effectiveness can be measured. Les Roches also recognised that the self-assessment process for institutional accreditation identified gaps in some of its internal quality processes and has helped the institution develop a more effective system to address these gaps, move towards reconfiguring KPIs (in line with strategic objectives) and thus close the loop. This has included not only the establishment of different committees over time (e.g. the Research Committee), but also the contribution of a wide variety of voices to ensure that the information shared – qualitative and quantitative – is consistent,

<sup>2</sup> See the "Mission and Governance" page on the Les Roches website. <https://lesroches.edu/meet-les-roches/mission-and-governance/>

easily understood, suitably resourced and able to uphold the quality system needed to support the strategic priorities of the organisation.

For these reasons, the group of experts believes that Les Roches would benefit from streamlining the structure and processes of its quality system so that it can be extended to all the institution's activities (see standard 1.2 below).

The group of experts assesses standard 1.1 as being largely fulfilled.

Standard 1.2: The quality assurance system shall be incorporated into the strategy of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and efficiently support its development. It includes processes verifying whether the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector fulfils its mandate while taking account of its type and specific characteristics.

As detailed in section 3, the quality assurance system is based on a six-point methodology and takes a holistic approach to quality management. Les Roches has adopted the *Fitness for Purpose* quality principle here to ensure that it is delivering on its mission and meeting the main goals of the strategic plan. This recent strategic planning process has sought to ensure that the revised vision and mission needed to address a rapidly changing world – following a global pandemic and rapid growth in some technologies – can still protect the same core values and offer a message focussed on community, knowledge and transformation through learning. The most recent five-year strategy plan is for 2024–28, and it contains seven main goals which cover a range of areas including the student experience, financial growth and performance, international/global presence, become a leading influencer in the sector, promoting competitive differentiation of the two campuses and locations and, finally, building up innovation and expertise within the institution and sustainability across the hospitality sector.

The main objectives, which are updated on an annual basis and derived from the goals included in the strategic plan, are organised around the quality assurance system. It follows a cyclic model (the PIER model – see section 3), which makes it easier for individuals, teams, departments and committees to design, implement and manage their quality processes. The PIER model can be adapted to facilitate most quality activities within the institution. For example, the model operates as both a vertical system – which includes surveys, a feedback mechanism and discussions with hierarchical superiors – and a horizontal system, which includes peer review and contribution in programme design, teaching and assessment.

The PIER system includes a range of KPIs which are said to be tracked and benchmarked to fulfil strategic goals. As these have evolved, existing KPIs have been used as the basis for addressing new ones. Les Roches confirmed that the Board meets four times a year to review updates in relation to KPIs to ensure that the strategic plan is on course and to consider any adjustments required.

The group of experts noted that where there was a process of regular reporting or a feedback system in place, it was easier to identify the necessary adjustments. However, this process does not yet cover all the institution's activities. The group of experts therefore requests that Les Roches continues developing the processes of its quality system, so as to cover all the activities specific to its type (for research and teaching, see standard 3.2) and thus fully support the realisation of its mandate.

The group of experts also probed further regarding the monitoring of KPIs in between Management Committee meetings, and it was confirmed that the monitoring of KPIs was

constant where clear objectives and tasks were assigned to the appropriate owners. However, the group of experts did recognise that while the KPIs were linked to objectives, at times there did not appear to be a clear link to a specific timetable or person(s) responsible for actioning the objectives. It was further noted that the majority of KPIs have the same end-of-year deadline (e.g. the objectives and targets for sustainability and DEIB), and that some KPIs were not measurable due to a lack of specific information or being too broad in scope. Although they seem to be working well in the quality system overall, the experts expect that their use should be formally clarified and improved. The group of experts recommends that the performance indicators would benefit from further consideration.

Les Roches has recognised that a system of annual reporting is the basis for effective KPI monitoring. The annual report enables more incremental periodic reflection on established processes, making them easier to review, update and implement. The introduction of high-level annual reporting provides for greater participation from the relevant stakeholders – at an institutional level – and nurtures stronger support for the processes in place. The group of experts noted with satisfaction that the introduction of an annual reporting structure provided for more consistent monitoring of the KPIs and the processes in place to support them. The group of experts further welcomed the commitment to review this process in 2025 to measure its effectiveness to date.

The group of experts assesses standard 1.2 as being partially fulfilled.

Condition #1: Les Roches must redefine its quality assurance system so that it takes account of all the institution's activities specific to its type and thus fully supports the realisation of its mandate by setting SMART KPIs.

Recommendation #1: Reduce the number of KPIs and ensure associated goals are SMART (i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and have clearly assigned owners to support the development of the Les Roches' strategy more effectively.

Standard 1.3: At all levels, all representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall be involved in developing the quality assurance system and in its implementation, in particular students, mid-level faculty staff, professors and administrative and technical staff. Quality assurance responsibilities must be transparently and clearly assigned.

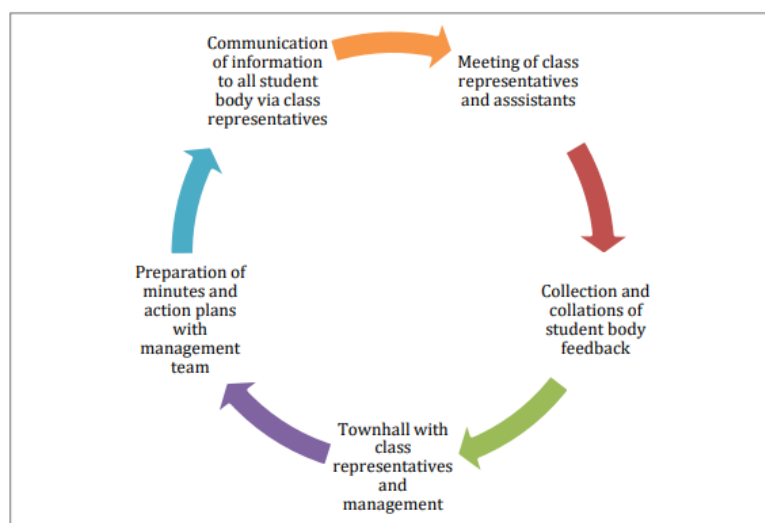
Inclusivity is one of the eight quality principles that Les Roches has adopted as part of its strategy. The quality principles adopted by Les Roches were developed in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure a shared institutional understanding of quality. A series of workshops and surveys to test these principles was undertaken by the institution as part of the self-assessment.

The quality assurance system is supported by an institutional governance structure which ensures that both internal and external stakeholder groups are appropriately represented and are able to fulfil their roles within the quality framework. Internal representation is covered across a range of committees and includes the Governing Board with three specialised sub-committees. Separate institutional Management and Academic Committees provide support to a range of other committees representing various internal stakeholder groups including faculty staff and other professional staff as well as an Employee Committee and Student Governance Association (SGA).

The Management Committee recognises the importance of ensuring that internal quality assurance activities are concluded on an annual basis. This includes self-assessment of the system in place to monitor the effectiveness of all internal quality assurance responsibilities. The group of experts noted that these were suspended temporarily due to preparations for the AAQ institutional accreditation process, and that events such as this have highlighted the need for additional actions and greater support when large one-off projects are planned.

Students and their role in both external and internal quality assurance processes at Les Roches are critical for ensuring that the institution can fulfil its mission. Student contribution and participation in quality assurance is framed around the SGA (see “SGA Class Delegates’ Roles in Quality Assurance” below). The SGA manages the network class representatives, interaction with staff on campus and academic management to ensure that the student community can direct their opinions, feedback and concerns through clear and interactive channels of communication. While SGA and class delegates undergo quality assurance training, the group of experts advised that this type of training needed to be provided regularly and consistently. The experts also urge Les Roches to facilitate opportunities for class representatives to meet other students and peers in similar roles outside of the institution.

*SGA Class Delegates’ Roles in Quality Assurance*



Since the student experience is one of the main objectives of the strategic plan, the group of experts was also interested in learning whether students are considered an important stakeholder group, and therefore at the centre of the quality assurance system. Based on their engagement with stakeholders, the group of experts could determine that the student experience is central to the key activities and that Les Roches works closely with employers and the hospitality industry to ensure students receive relevant training and have the transversal skills needed to pursue various career paths in a wide range of industries. The institution recognises that for students to fulfil the skills and competence required, appropriate support is also needed to safeguard their well-being, taking into consideration the diversity of the student body. The group of experts is satisfied that Les Roches has devised a quality assurance system that prioritises the student experience, is evident in the quality of its interns, responds to market needs and through maintaining networks and valuing relationships.

It should be noted that external stakeholders also contribute to Les Roches’ quality assurance system and extend to a global community comprising alumni and representatives of the local,

national and global hospitality industry, local authorities and other accreditation bodies. The 47 visiting faculty members and representatives of Les Roches' parent company, Sommet Education, are also included.

The group of experts assesses standard 1.3 as being largely fulfilled.

Standard 1.4: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall periodically analyze the relevance of its quality assurance system and make the necessary adjustments.

Les Roches' quality assurance system is evaluated as an integral part of the strategic planning process. The system is composed of a series of processes to better facilitate active engagement by all constituent members. The continuous review of the quality assurance system and the institution's commitment to take constructive action to ensure the system is appropriately aligned and can support strategic priorities through key changes introduced in line with the previous strategic plan 2019–23. For example, this is demonstrated through the establishment of a Curriculum and Program Development Committee to manage both existing and new functions with the development of new academic programmes and the establishment of a research strategy.

The regular internal appraisal of the quality system for reviewing Les Roches' quality assurance system is determined by planning cycles and external assessments. The institution highlights that this approach has strong advantages through elevating the regular reporting of strategic goals, incorporating feedback from external peers and agencies and identifying where gaps emerge and actions are needed.

Les Roches also engages in a system of external review processes and audits, which not only ensures that it meets its quality principle relating to compliance, but also that the quality assurance system is both efficient and effective. Les Roches has regular engagement with other accreditation bodies and is therefore experienced in these processes; it has developed a quality assurance system that can both comply with and respond promptly and effectively to the range of standards and requirements of other regulatory agencies.

The group of experts praised the strong quality management processes in place and the operational excellence in preserving the quality assurance system. It acknowledged that there is strong evidence across the internal quality system to support the approach taken by Les Roches. As noted in section 1.2, the introduction of an annual reporting structure has provided for more regular monitoring of the KPIs and the processes in place to support them.

However, the group of experts did question why a review of the new quality assurance policy, which is so fundamental to the proper functioning of the quality assurance system, has been held off until 2025 and was not subject to review before the launch of a new strategic plan in 2024. Les Roches acknowledged the gap in the timeframe between the two, but explained that it was considered important to allow the new system time to breathe in order to determine what the challenges were and decide how best to address them. While the group of experts accepted this as a reasonable approach, it did create some uncertainty and a possible lack of clarity within the system. The group of experts noted that as the 2025 QAS review is scheduled to take place in the middle of the 2024–28 strategic plan, it recommends that an additional review should be undertaken before the end of the current strategy cycle.

The group of experts assesses standard 1.4 as being largely fulfilled.

Recommendation #2: Update the formalisation of the quality assurance system review, so that it



becomes aligned with the institution's current strategic timetable and can more effectively support future strategic planning and accreditation cycles.

## Area 2: Governance

Standard 2.1: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the organizational structure and decision-making processes enable the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector to fulfil its mission and to achieve its strategic objectives.

Les Roches has a complex organisational structure, given that it has two campuses – one in Crans Montana, Switzerland and one in Marbella, Spain – as well as a range of support services provided by the parent company, Sommet Education. The governance structure demonstrates a bottom-to-top approach which incorporates all constituent participants in the review and development of quality assurance processes. The organisational structure highlights the key roles that are responsible for decision-making, and Les Roches has organisational and governance structures that it considers to both facilitate and support robust decision-making.

The Governing Board has the highest level of authority; notably, it approves major new initiatives involving institutional constituencies and engages in consultation with relevant stakeholders in areas focussed on institutional quality, integrity and sustainability. For example, key appointments such as the introduction of a new CEO in 2022 were preceded by a review of management roles by the Governing Board in 2020 to identify whether there were gaps in any critical functions.

The Governing Board is mainly composed of independent and external representatives. These members are nominated through connections based on knowledge and skill sets from a broad range of stakeholders, including academics and industry experts. There is a strong emphasis on the partnership between the CEO and the Board. The CEO works closely with the Chair prior to board meetings, and the move from face-to-face meetings to virtual meetings has meant that increased flexibility is afforded to senior management and the Governing Board where needed.

During the on-site visit, Les Roches confirmed that significant effort has been made to ensure that the organisational and governance structures at the institution are aligned in order to support the shared strategic objectives across campuses and their monitoring, as well as to safeguard the consistency of the quality assurance system. The establishment of the institutional Management Committee and the commencement of joint annual reporting have been done to ensure that the strategic objectives are met. The group of experts noted that the direction of the strategy is supported by additional resources at the disposal of Sommet Education. These additional resources provide a network of support between the institutions under the Sommet Education umbrella, but more specifically for Les Roches, they promote consistency across the two campuses and a more effective method of addressing mutual topics of interest. For example, the institution's approach to the current advantages and challenges of generative artificial intelligence is a topic on which Sommet Education may offer specific external support and expertise.

The experts noted, however, that the system's structure is complex and would benefit from being simplified. It is acknowledged that while the recent appointment of the CEO, who has direct expertise of the Marbella campus (as a former campus director), has contributed to greater oversight, management and leadership of the quality assurance system with the support of the Governing Board, some decision-making processes would benefit from further development and articulation. For example, the criteria used for performance evaluation are reliant on student feedback and satisfaction, but it is not always clear how a student should be

defined: as a “client” of the institution or as a “product” for the industry. While either interpretation could be reasonably argued, the group of experts insists that the tools to measure them would benefit from a clear indication of the criteria to be used. The group of experts urges Les Roches to simplify the structure of its quality assurance system and reorganise it so that processes are efficient and serve the interests of the institution. It underscores that Les Roches could consider regional collaboration with similar higher education establishments, as this would provide a more favourable context for effective performance evaluation.

The group of experts assesses standard 2.1 as being partially fulfilled.

Condition #2: Les Roches must simplify the organisational structure of its quality assurance system so that processes are explicit and the institution can evaluate the performance of its goals and achieve its strategic objectives.

Standard 2.2: The quality assurance system shall systematically contribute to providing relevant and current quantitative and qualitative information on which the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector relies to make current and strategic decisions.

The quality assurance system through IT allows the recording, monitoring and sharing of data where needed and relevant. This data includes student feedback through surveys, course evaluations and employee engagement through a series of surveys (supported by Sommet Education). The qualitative data is used to consistently improve services and respond to feedback from students, staff and other key stakeholders. The rich data that is provided enables Les Roches to consider the effectiveness of the quality assurance system in line with its strategic objectives. These include meeting minutes from a range of committees and departments, topic-specific focus groups with stakeholder groups that take place periodically and larger townhalls that enable broader input from all constituent participants as well as engagement and detailed feedback from external stakeholders through industry and alumni networks.

Access to data at Les Roches is managed by IT through a system of folders held on an internal server, with each folder being assigned to an owner to manage its content. The storage, management and availability of this data is monitored in parallel with the institution’s policy on data management, which is updated in accordance with changes to the quality assurance system. At the unit level, KPIs are assigned to individual departments and measured locally to ensure the achievement of objectives and the completion of action plans.

The group of experts was satisfied that there was evidence of strong qualitative and quantitative data being applied to support the quality framework through (i) the development of new courses, promoting agility and quick adaptation to new trends, (ii) the introduction of the research strategy and a consistent and shared understanding of academic freedom and (iii) student training in digital tools, research methods, artificial intelligence and the proper use of it, as well as recognising and avoiding plagiarism.

The group of experts noted the improvements that Les Roches intended to make in 2024, which included progressing to a fully integrated cloud-based data management system and a more comprehensive review of institution-wide questionnaires. It welcomes these developments and encourages Les Roches to continue its efforts.

The group of experts assesses standard 2.2 as being largely fulfilled.

Standard 2.3: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector have an appropriate participatory right and that basic conditions are in place allowing them to independently operate.

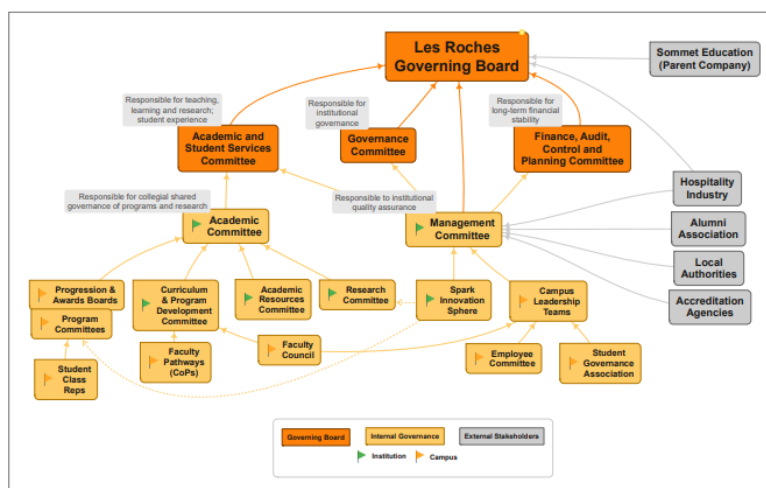
The representative groups with decision-making roles are divided by Les Roches into the following constituent parts: (i) the Governing Board and Management Committee and (ii) the Academic, Constituent Committees and Communities of Practice, comprising representation by faculty, non-faculty staff, students, alumni and representatives of Sommet Education.

It is noted that Les Roches has consistently updated its governance structure to meet the current needs of its stakeholders since its establishment in 2005. This has included incorporating transversal representation across committees and communities of practice, where a 2019 review prompted the Governing Board to increase the participation of internal stakeholders in processes that would strengthen the quality assurance system in place to support the evolving strategic objectives of the institution.

While this has facilitated wider participation across all constituent communities, Les Roches has identified gaps and the progress is staggered between campuses as they respond to different local challenges. The group of experts noted the areas for improvement flagged by Les Roches with the intention of strengthening compliance with this standard and ensuring consistency across both campuses.

The group of experts also identified other areas, such as increased diversity in committee composition, that the institution should consider. The Governing Board comprises 11 members, of which 8 are deemed independent of personal or financial interests. There is broad diversity of gender, age and background on the Board, ensuring consistent representation of stakeholder and industry partners in Les Roches. There are three sub-committees overseeing (i) Academic and Student Services, (ii) Governance and (iii) Finance, Audit, Control and Planning (see “Les Roches Governance Structure” below). These create opportunities for direct communication between the Governing Board and the Management Committee, which reports on a range of topics.

Les Roches Governance Structure



However, the group of experts considers that there is still scope to further increase the diversity by including one or two members that would offer more specific representation of the communities of practice, e.g. the inclusion of a student representative and/or other stakeholder

representatives who can offer comparable experiences reflective of those at Les Roches' campuses in Marbella and Crans Montana and can play a direct role in the institution's strategic decision-making processes.

The Academic Committee is a sub-committee of the Governing Board but is independent of the Management Committee. The committees are linked by the Executive Academic Dean, who is chair of the Academic Committee and a member of the Management Committee. The Academic Committee delegates many decision-making responsibilities to other committees and communities of practice including management of student progression, awarding of degrees, oversight of the research strategy and budget by the more recently established Research Committee.

In contrast, non-faculty staff are represented on an Employee Committee while students are represented by the SGA, which comprises class representatives. The group of experts noted that the composition of the SGA varies between campuses and that there are plans in the next two years to regularise the roles of these related associations and to establish a separate Employee Committee in Marbella to represent staff there.

The Faculty Council is the main body representing academic staff. It comprises representatives who are elected biennially and is chaired on a rotational basis; its composition is intended to reflect the range of faculty roles and identities at Les Roches. The group of experts noted that in terms of transversal participation, there is no student representative on the Faculty Council (due to the confidentiality of some items up for discussion), but that students are included in programme committees, where they contribute towards programme development, monitoring and review. The group of experts supported this decision and agreed that students were more likely to be confident in their roles and their contributions to the programme committees.

However, the group of experts did question the role and direct contribution of visiting faculty on the Faculty Council. It was noted that visiting faculty do not currently have a defined role in institutional decision-making and that there is no formal process by which they can contribute to this process. While they are actively encouraged to participate in discussions at the school level and they contribute feedback on specific subjects/programmes in which they teach, their feedback is not formally represented or reported to the Governing Board. The group of experts considered that given the high ratio of visiting faculty in Les Roches this is a considerable oversight and an area that Les Roches should consider a priority.

The group of experts assesses standard 2.3 as being partially fulfilled.

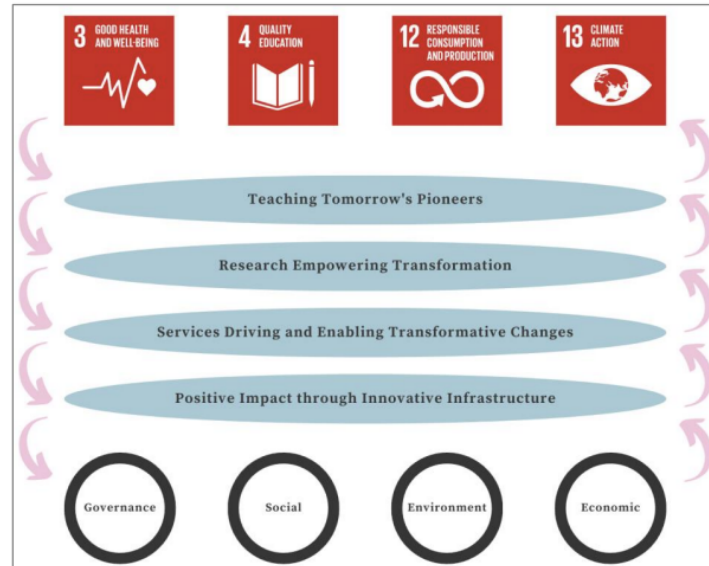
Condition #3: Les Roches must draw up participation rules to cover all its representative groups (including visiting faculty) on the various committees and ensure measurable diversity of representation on its Governing Board.

Standard 2.4: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall give consideration to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in the completion of its tasks. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.

Sustainability is one of the eight quality assurance principles (see section 3) highlighted by Les Roches. The institution by its own admission has made a strong commitment towards upholding sustainability and implementing a range of activities through a model related to its sustainability strategy (see "Les Roches' Sustainability Model" below). These include activities in economic,

social, environmental as well as sustainability-related academic programmes, research and partnerships.

*Les Roches' Sustainability Model*



In its analysis, Les Roches notes that financial and economic sustainability are closely linked to its financial governance, where financial autonomy forms part of an integrated approach to the management of efficiency, transparency and accountability in the institution. Other accreditation review models, such as the screening process undertaken by NECHE, have helped Les Roches focus on the monitoring of financial stability and sustainability in the short to medium term and have ensured that future financial planning in their strategic plan 2024–28 includes stability through strategic goals, growth and consolidation. For example, Les Roches' ability to respond quickly to a sudden spike in increased demand for financial support through scholarships and sponsorship during the global pandemic (which was substantially reduced again within two years) helped to consolidate its financial long-term sustainability and simultaneously demonstrate its commitment going forward.

Les Roches takes pride in its corporate social responsibility (CSR), seeing it as a strong suit where collaboration with other institutions, through the support of Sommet Education, has provided opportunities to identify common United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and work these into achievable KPIs at both campuses over a three-year period. While the group of experts acknowledged the challenge this poses for the Crans Montana campus in particular (due to ongoing infrastructural changes), the experts noted many positive examples of work in progress: the use of rental cars, reduced food waste and the development of a "green club" to identify areas of the college that could be greener and more socially responsible. Other examples are related to human capital and activities for facilitating better team-building and acknowledging the diverse student population on campus. The group of experts recognised the strong relationship between the student body and institutional staff, and was assured to hear that students knew the range of channels open to them in seeking support or help for fellow students.

Les Roches also confirmed that following a performance review of sustainable practice it was assured of the good practice in place, which was systematically coordinated and evaluated

against identified KPIs. As a result, a structured framework will be put in place comprising five teams within the Sustainability Division to ensure long-term success. The group of experts noted that at the Marbella campus various ISO certifications have been renewed and that the Crans Montana campus intends to follow suit to ensure consistency across the institution.

Les Roches has a staff retention record that typically exceeds five years of service, which it attributes to a positive workplace culture and a high-quality workforce. This was largely borne out in the meetings the group of experts had with Les Roches staff – both permanent and visiting faculty – in their experience of the support and opportunities offered to them by the institution. The experts noted that an employee retention policy which would include specific training for managers was currently in development, and they encouraged Les Roches to progress and implement this policy quickly.

The group of experts further noted a range of other action plans in progress, namely (i) to ensure that outstanding CSR targets are fulfilled and (ii) to resume ISO 14001 certification at the Crans Montana campus in 2024; they recommended that these be concluded expediently.

The group of experts assesses standard 2.4 as being largely fulfilled.

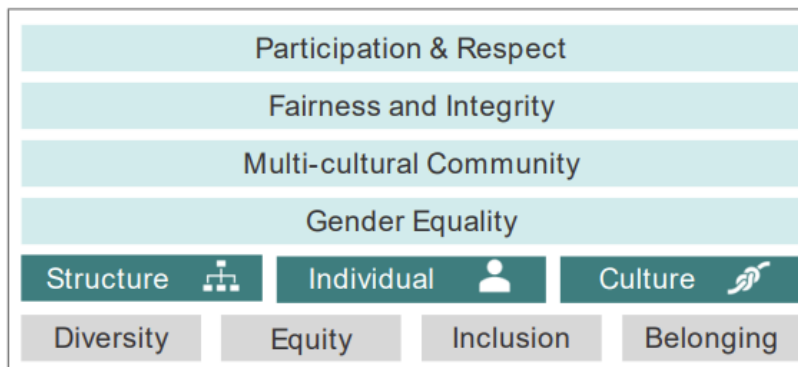
Recommendation #3: Link economic, social and environmental sustainability objectives to a precise timeline as per recommendation #1 under Standard 1.2.

Standard 2.5: To carry out its tasks, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall promote equal opportunities and actual gender equality for its staff and students. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.

In 2021, Les Roches carried out a full review of its practices on diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI), which covered an evaluation of its values, policies and KPIs. The institution has over 100 nationalities represented in the student population and 25 nationalities in the staff body across the two campuses. As such, it has confirmed its commitment to DEI through underpinning policies that guarantee best practice and have rigorous protocols to provide a safe, inclusive environment. The global pandemic created a number of unanticipated challenges with regard to student well-being, and during this period a number of initiatives were commenced (e.g. Mental Health Awareness Week or Health and Safety Day) and more active events were promoted, such as an annual sports day. To support greater work-life balance for staff, the institution offers flexible and remote working options where feasible.

The group of experts noted that legacy data management systems have hindered the gathering and reporting of DEI data, thus making it more challenging to establish meaningful KPIs and targets that are built on previous experience and output. The institution is continuing to build on developments in this area by working to address deficiencies and has established a model for DEI and belonging that takes account of the individual, the institutional structure and culture (see “Les Roches DEIB Model” below).

*Les Roches DEIB model*



Gender diversity is also a prominent consideration regarding the internal structures within the organisation. The overall gender ratio of staff in the institution is currently 60:40, with more women than men working in the industry across a range of roles, including management. However, parity in pay has not been realised, with a current salary differential of 2%. The group of experts acknowledged the need for greater balance in this area and in other areas such as committee structures, which often do not reflect the current 60:40 ratio in gender diversity. Notably, the Governing Board currently has a ratio of 70% men to 30% women.

In other areas such as discrimination and anti-bullying, Les Roches takes a zero-tolerance approach and has established both formal and informal communication links with students. The group of experts is confident that the open-door policy is clearly welcomed by students and there is an understanding of the policy and approach taken by the institution. However, the experts also recognised that the formal approach, and steps to be taken where cases of alleged discrimination occurred, was less clear to students. There also appeared to be some variance between the campuses in both the collective understanding of the DEI policy and the approach to be taken by students when incidents occur. The group of experts recommends that the relevant policy and associated procedures would benefit from greater formalisation and communication to ensure that all constituent stakeholders are informed of the protocols in place at both campuses.

The group of experts noted that Les Roches intends to carry out a range of training activities on discrimination, to address the gender pay disparity and to significantly improve data collection by implementing a new SIS system to ensure that any objectives set for KPIs related to DEI are data-informed going forward. The group of experts also urged the institution to adopt greater gender diversity on the board and requires this to be addressed as a priority to ensure there is consistency at all levels of the organisation.

The group of experts assesses standard 2.5 as being partially fulfilled.

**Condition #4:** Les Roches must establish a clear policy for promoting equal opportunities and actual gender equality, define precise objectives in this area and an action plan for achieving them. The institution must also ensure that this policy is communicated and understood by employees and students of both campuses.

### Area 3: Teaching, research and services

Standard 3.1: The activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall correspond to its type, specific features and strategic objectives. They shall mainly relate to teaching, research and services and be carried out in accordance with the principle of freedom and independence within the limits of the mandate of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

Les Roches has a mono-disciplinary applied sciences orientation with a strong international identity and an established reputation in the hospitality industry, both nationally and internationally. It has presented its core activities under three categories: teaching, research and services. Les Roches' academic programme portfolio includes undergraduate, postgraduate consecutive and post-experience continuing education programmes that are designed to meet the needs of Les Roches' institutional profile and respond to industry needs. These also align with the vision and mission of the institution.

Les Roches has a long history and reputation in delivering its programmes, and the institution has well-established, embedded and student-centred processes for the regular and periodic review of these programmes. A notable example of this is the flagship undergraduate programme Bachelor of Business Administration in Global Hospitality Management. It has evolved from the original vocational Les Roches Diploma, but the group of experts noted that it is not consistent with the recommended naming conventions for bachelor's and master's degrees. It is further noted that the number of ECTS credits attributed to other diploma programmes is not always clear. This is addressed more fully in standard 3.4.

Les Roches defines its research and innovation activities into two component parts: the first relates to traditional academic research, while the second relates to innovative and applied research of the four research areas reflected in the mission and values of the institution: innovation and entrepreneurship, globalisation, sustainability and scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

By its own admission, Les Roches concedes that the research activity has not been subject to the same level of scrutiny as the development of programmes and that the focus on research has until recently been concentrated primarily in applied research undertaken by students. A Research and Innovation Strategy was established in 2019, but the funding initially earmarked to develop research activities had to be redirected towards support for teaching and learning online during the global pandemic. Although resumed in 2021, research activity generally and investment growth in this area (up 32%) has tended to lean towards the continued development of applied research activity by students with the notable establishment of the Spark Innovation Sphere in 2021 and the appointment of a Head of Research in 2023.

Certainly, the development and application of applied research across educational programmes at Les Roches is much easier to navigate than the trajectory of research led by faculty members. The group of experts commended Les Roches for the innovations that Spark Innovation Sphere has facilitated to support student learning and develop skills in applied research in the hospitality industry. The strong collaboration and partnership networks developed between the institution and the industry have strengthened the education and skills of students, which is evident in the above-average career opportunities and continued high rates of employability that graduates from Les Roches enjoy. However, the group of experts also noted that while this research and innovation hub provides a platform by which research and innovation can be interwoven alongside the degree programmes, it does not directly support the development of faculty in growing a strong, peer-reviewed research portfolio.



The group of experts notes that the quality assurance process for research focusses predominantly on institutional procedures for research integrity and ethics. The Research Committee, led by the Head of Research, is responsible for all “research activities” related to applied research and for managing the input by different stakeholders, assessing the research and supporting the production of research findings for dissemination to the industry or other interested parties. The group of experts is concerned that there is no clear delineation between the applied research undertaken by students and the research that is faculty-led, with clear objectives, actions and KPIs to track and monitor its trajectory. They consider it important that the institution clearly promotes the published work of its faculty members to ensure that they are appropriately recognised as catalysts and leaders of it. The group of experts noted that there are currently only six faculty members on the Crans Montana campus that have specific hours allocated for research. One of them is a doctoral candidate, while another has only recently completed a PhD. However, 75% of the academic faculty are involved in the supervision of theses and supporting students’ applied research projects as part of their studies. Resources for research vary between the two campuses: in Marbella, the focus of investment has rested on increasing doctoral numbers among faculty, which have grown from four to ten in the past two years. Therefore, there is currently a heavy reliance on visiting faculty, of which seven have PhDs, to support the development and enhancement of a research portfolio at Les Roches. The group of experts noted that the institutional research agenda seems to be primarily focussed on developing competitive research opportunities that lean towards teaching and learning and responding to industry demands rather than growing and enhancing an institutional research portfolio. The experts are concerned that there does not appear to be a specific timeline or targets for producing certain outputs, for instance, the publication of a set number of peer-reviewed papers, attendance at colloquia or the optimum capacity for building internal research expertise among the faculty and reducing reliance on visiting staff. Les Roches has conceded that further investment in this area is required, and while the group of experts commended the institution for its ongoing support of faculty staff to develop their research capacity and the extent of academic freedom guaranteed to faculty and students, it requires the institution to ensure that there are sufficient investment and resources in place to support the growth of research, that related policies and procedures are clear and underpin the research strategy and that there is a delineation between student-led research and the development of an overall institutional-led research portfolio.

The group of experts assesses standard 3.1 as being partially fulfilled.

Condition #5: Les Roches must establish a strategy and action plan to ensure that the institution continues to develop its own research, integrating the increase in the number of its own researchers and incorporating a significant amount of peer-reviewed research.

Recommendation #4: Increase the amount of time dedicated to research, establish a budget line for the necessary funds dedicated to research, ensure that all of those involved in research publish, participate in colloquia or conferences.

Standard 3.2: The quality assurance system shall provide for a periodic evaluation of teaching and research activities, of services and of results achieved in these areas.

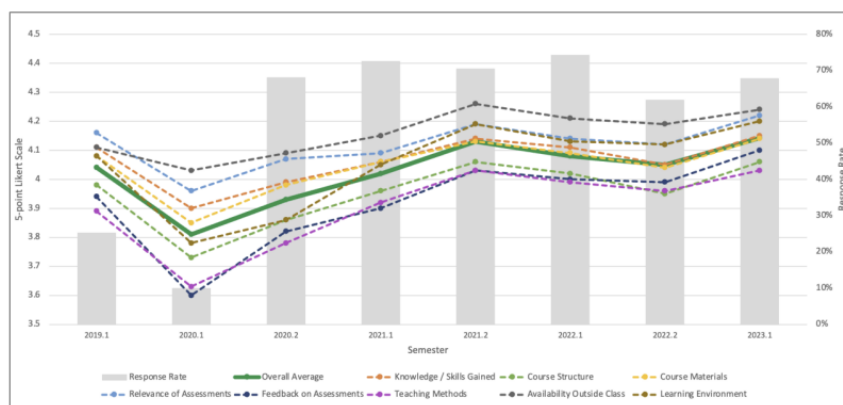
Les Roches’ approach to the periodic review of its programmes, research and services is based on its quality principles of consistency, excellence and fitness for purpose – as detailed in section 3.

Les Roches has a detailed governance structure that oversees the periodic review of internal programmes and involves a range of committees. Each programme is overseen by a Program Committee assigned the responsibility of tracking qualitative feedback, quantitative course evaluations, grading statistics and periodic course reviews – all of which is reported to the Academic Committee. There is a clear framework in place for reporting data to ensure that KPIs are met and that benchmarking of programmes can be tracked consistently across the institution. Les Roches has well-established processes in place to review teaching and academic programmes. It has also been subjected to full-programme portfolio reviews by other accreditation bodies such as NECHE, and has recently completed an evaluation of their portfolio of programmes to ensure compliance with EHEA standards.

A peer process comprising three component parts is in place, and following verification of the syllabus and assessment process, there is (i) the engagement of external examiners, (ii) input and feedback from student representatives and (iii) a review by faculty and planning for the following year. This creates a pathway for discussion for future planning and creates communication links with the programme committees to close the loop and ensure that inputs and best practice are implemented. While this evaluation process essentially connects the student to the programme, the group of experts was keen to know how well the outcome of reviews was communicated with all constituent stakeholders, including students.

Similarly, a peer review system is used in teaching. New faculty members begin teaching by using shared best practice based on class observations and previous feedback. Their input helps to identify any gaps which are also fed into faculty development to help with future training needs. Essentially, the outcome of the feedback has included sharing the results in separate peer-to-peer processes, but there does not appear to be a single formal communication channel in which the feedback is shared with all constituent stakeholders, e.g. the student representatives would typically inform students. However, the group of experts noted that student feedback had formed part of the decision-making process when they saw clear actions taken regarding programme updates or changes. The experts also noted that feedback data in a student evaluation of learning (see “Student Evaluation of Learning” below) relating to teaching methods and course structure were consistently low (given the high response in programme feedback of 70%). It was confirmed to the experts that new methods for surveys (or question types) were being considered within the PIER loop to ensure the quality of the feedback. The experts welcome these initiatives, as they see the development of a system for evaluating teaching as necessary.

Student Evaluation of Learning



It was also acknowledged that reviews and evaluations of research fall within the responsibilities of the Research Committee, and the outcomes and outputs related to these are reported to the Academic Committee. The group of experts noted that a system is in place to compile the outputs related to student-led applied research, and while it is accepted that this forms a useful repository for all student research undertaken at Les Roches and provides alignment with the strategy, the group of experts consider that there remains an imperative to clearly articulate the processes and procedures required to differentiate between student-led applied research and facilitating a conducive environment and the supports needed for faculty members to continue building the research portfolio (see standard 3.1).

The group of experts assesses standard 3.2 as being partially fulfilled.

Condition #6: Les Roches must put in place a holistic system for evaluating its activities, in particular for teaching and research activities.

Standard 3.3: The quality assurance system shall ensure that principles and objectives linked to the European Higher Education Area are taken into consideration.

Les Roches has a long history of teaching hospitality management education in Switzerland which has become firmly rooted in the Swiss higher education system. With a second campus in Marbella, Spain, and strong relationships with other European HEIs, Les Roches also has wide expertise across the broader European higher education system.

The institution also has diverse international student and staff bodies representing up to 100 nationalities, which gives it a greater global reach. Student mobility and the international recognition of its degrees is essential to its students, and diploma supplements – introduced in 2023 – help to facilitate the recognition of their degrees. The process for credit transfer and entry to programmes at Les Roches has been streamlined and is now more accessible. With its two campuses, students are also encouraged to spend a semester during their studies at the other campus. The group of experts noted that master's degree students highlighted increased opportunities to connect with other HEIs, e.g. Glion Institute of Higher Education.

The profile of the faculty is also shaped by mobility, which provides opportunities to build relationships, network and experience the working practices of other institutions. There has been a significant rise in the numbers of visiting faculty reported at the Crans Montana campus, from 3 to 22 between 2019 and 2023.

The academic programmes offered at Les Roches have been recognised by the Canton of Valais since 2002 and have met NECHE standards of accreditation for institutions of higher education since 2005. In 2022, the institution began a process of reviewing all academic programmes to ensure that they met the standards of the Qualifications Framework for the Swiss Higher Education Area. Updates included adopting ECTS credits to measure student workload, integrating Dublin descriptors and adjusting the programme structure and length to comply with Bologna Process and European Quality Frameworks. While most of these changes have been adopted, a transition period is required for others to ensure that current students experience minimal impact to their studies and faculty have more time to prepare. The group of experts noted with satisfaction that Les Roches will continue to use the quality assurance mechanisms in place to ensure a smooth transition and support faculty and students with updated information as appropriate.

The group of experts assesses standard 3.3 as being entirely fulfilled.

Standard 3.4: The quality assurance system shall ensure compliance with the criteria for admission, for the assessment of the student performance and for issuing final diplomas according to the mission of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. These criteria shall be defined, communicated and applied systematically, transparently and consistently.

The admission criteria set by Les Roches endeavour to ensure a balance in candidates' academic competence, personal motivation and professional potential. The institution has rigorous admission criteria in place that are applied consistently to all candidates. For students who wish to progress to second-cycle or continuing education programmes, they must be able to confirm that they have completed the first-cycle competencies. The admission requirements are published on the website and in detailed programme brochures. The criteria are consistently reviewed by the Admissions Committee, and any modifications to programmes must be approved by the Academic Committee and align with the strategic plan. Similarly, regulations for academic and assessment strategies are published in the Academic Catalogue and are adapted for different programmes. This information is available through student portals and an assessment handbook produced specifically to aid students with the range of assessments. Sample rubrics, marking guides and guidance for online exam design are available on Moodle LMS.

The group of experts noted that under the institution's admissions requirements,<sup>3</sup> it was stated that "prospective students should acquaint themselves with some aspect of the hospitality business". Here, prospective students are advised to do so before applying – through internships, shadow opportunities, industry-related employment or informational interviews. However, the practical year is in fact mandatory under the HEdA (Ch. 4, Art. 25). As such, the experts require that these elements be included and communicated to future students and all stakeholders through the Les Roches website, published materials and all other forms of public communication.

There are clear and rigorous procedures in place for the operation and management of the Progression and Awards Board. The Registry office, independent of the faculty, manages the progression of students through the various stages of their programmes and provides summative grade reports two weeks after exam boards with personalised explanations for those who have not met the progression/graduation requirements. They are responsible for the production and management of certification, and they ensure that all conditions have been met by both the student and faculty before awards and diploma supplements are issued.

As noted in standard 3.1, the Bachelor of Business Administration in Global Hospitality Management was upgraded to a bachelor's degree programme following the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The group of experts noted that the existing programme was updated and fundamentally retained the original core competencies and placements rather than having to extend or create new ones. However, the number of ECTS credits awarded for the Bachelor's degree differs from one document to another. While the brochure describing the curriculum proposes a Bachelor's degree of 180 ECTS credits, the diploma supplement sent to the experts by the institution grants 240 ECTS credits. This variation in credit volume together with the naming convention used for the Bachelor's degree shows that Les Roches has not yet finished adapting its diplomas to meet the requirements of the HEdA and its Accreditation Ordinance. The experts require that (i) Les Roches adapts its diplomas to meet the legal requirements for

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<sup>3</sup> [Les Roches](https://lesroches.edu/apply/admission-requirements/) Admission Requirements are outlined on the website. <https://lesroches.edu/apply/admission-requirements/>

accreditation and (ii) all degree titles going forward must conform with the naming conventions of “Bachelor of Science” and “Master of Science”, in accordance with the HEdA Accreditation Ordinance for the Swiss qualification framework. The institution must also undertake to communicate these updates to all prospective students and stakeholders.

Overall, the group of experts was pleased to note the effectiveness of the quality system in place at Les Roches and the transparent and rigorous processes in place for the admission, assessment, progression, and graduation of students.

The group of experts assesses standard 3.4 as being partially fulfilled.

Condition #7: Les Roches must modify its diplomas (to include the appropriate title and correct number of ECTS credits) and admission requirements so that they scrupulously comply with the HEdA (Ch. 4, Art. 25) and its Accreditation Ordinance (Section 1, Art. 2 and Section 2, Art. 4). These changes must be clearly communicated to prospective students and all stakeholders through the institution’s website, published materials and all other forms of public communication.

#### **Area 4: Resources**

Standard 4.1: With its competent authorities, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall assure that its personnel resources, infrastructure and financial means allow for operating on a going concern basis and for achieving its strategic objectives. The origin and allocation of financial resources and financing conditions shall be transparent.

Les Roches has confirmed that there is a multi-year strategic financial planning process in place to enable ongoing oversight of the finances and the development of long-term budget plans. Processes are in place to ensure that financial processes allow for timely decision-making and an accurate representation of the institution’s performance. Les Roches reports that there are dedicated teams at both campuses to support financial management across the organisation, and that these activities are supported by Sommet Education as part of an Operational Services Agreement between the two bodies. While the Governing Board has ultimate responsibility for financial management, the review of KPIs and the evaluation of students’ success, Les Roches has confirmed that it has primary responsibility for the strategic plan; its interaction with the Board has evolved, with it now acting in a supportive role.

The group of experts noted that principal funding at Les Roches is revenue from tuition and fees, with figures from 2022 showing that 60% of revenue came from net tuition fees and 22% from accommodation. Looking at the current financial model, the group of experts recognised that the changing academic landscape is very different now to how it was before the global pandemic. The growth in online learning and the global economic challenges have created a shift in demand from undergraduate to postgraduate programmes. This necessitates a change in focus to ensure that demand and market needs are met and that the financial model works and is fit for purpose. The experts are concerned that a shift to postgraduate programmes results in shorter programmes, which in turn has a knock-on effect on the sustainability of the current financial model. That said, they have acknowledged that the acquisition of Swiss accreditation is likely to have an upward shift in demand in all programmes offered at Les Roches, both nationally and internationally. Les Roches has also confirmed that the current infrastructure is adequate at both campuses to support any increased demand in the student and faculty population, including accommodation needs.

Les Roches employs 110 full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty members: 41 FTE in Crans Montana and 69 in Marbella. This includes a headcount of 31 full-time, 5 part-time and 22 visiting faculty members in Crans Montana and 59 full-time, 3 part-time and 26 visiting faculty members in Marbella. The faculty activity model details the range of activities in which faculty are involved and allocates dedicated time for research to faculty with a research focus (see below).

*Standard focus: 70% teaching / 30% scholarly activities & services to the institution*

*Teaching focus: 80% teaching / 20% scholarly activities & services to the institution*

*Research focus: 60% teaching / 40% scholarly activities & services to the institution*

The group of experts noted that an updated faculty activity model is progressing and will look at the resources available to faculty (including visiting faculty) to ensure adequate provision in order to support the necessary growth in research focus. The group of experts acknowledged the good working relationship with visiting faculty in Les Roches. Visiting faculty confirmed that they see themselves as treated equally to their colleagues and that their inclusion within faculty tended to develop into long relationships based on mutual respect and professionalism. Some visiting faculty members have transitioned and become permanent members of staff at Les Roches.

The group of experts was updated on the significant infrastructural changes that had taken place at the Crans Montana campus in the last few years following initial delays due to the pandemic. The experts acknowledged that Les Roches was continuing to invest in its campuses and overall infrastructure to ensure that its missions and strategic goals would enhance student experience and encourage and motivate greater institutional identity. Some notable investments are the introduction of the Spark Innovation Sphere in 2021 on the Crans Montana campus and the five-year Bahia residence project on the Marbella campus, which was completed in 2023. The group of experts was pleased to note that these investments are recognised and acknowledged by the student body, who largely concurred that these improvements positively impacted their overall experience. However, the experts encouraged senior management to closely monitor the financial implications for any changes in the business model.

The group of experts assesses standard 4.1 as being largely fulfilled.

Recommendation #5: Ensure that the economic model of Les Roches is responsive to changes in business conditions.

Standard 4.2: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the entire staff is qualified according to the type and specific characteristics of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. To this end, it shall also provide for its periodic assessment.

An organisational chart for Les Roches outlines the main staff categories, which are divided by the nature of their roles: academic, administrative and operational. Job descriptions for each post provide the purpose of the role and the mandatory/desired requirements, including qualifications, responsibilities, knowledge and skills and previous experience. There is clear documentation provided to demonstrate how each role is presented, which also includes details of the reporting line, relevant department and networks of interaction.

Senior management roles have other specific requirements in terms of qualifications and experience. For example, the most senior academic position is the Executive Academic Dean. Requirements for this position include a doctorate with a professor rank and an established

academic reputation. In a similar fashion, each member of Les Roches' management has qualifications and experience appropriate to their role and responsibilities.

It was acknowledged that the qualifications and experience required for various faculty ranks are detailed in the Faculty Development and Portfolio Review Policy and that visiting faculty would typically have a long-term relationship with the institution where contracts are less than 20% of an FTE, or in the case of a visiting lecturer and visiting professor, 50%.

The group of experts asked why there was a widening gap between the numbers of tenured professors and lecturers in the faculty. It was confirmed that many of the teaching staff are industry experts, but building capacity and supporting the research strategy is a priority which does not necessarily include appointing additional staff. It was highlighted to the experts that the faculty are in the best position to determine what the staffing needs are. Decisions by the Board are based on business cases submitted by faculty which identify the expertise required in response to changes in programmes or the implementation of the research strategy, and the Board does not interfere in these assessments.

The promotion of staff is interpreted as horizontal as well as vertical, where there are opportunities to build on experience and responsibility. This can be achieved through professional development and opportunities for mobility between campuses. The group of experts noted that Les Roches places significant importance on the professional development and growth of its staff and recognise and acknowledge the staff's contribution to the institution's vision and mission.

The group of experts further probed the impact of increased numbers of visiting faculty in Les Roches given the significant rise in their numbers in recent years (see "Distribution of Faculty Ranks at Les Roches" below).

*Distribution of faculty ranks at Les Roches*

Faculty Ranks	2021	2022	2023
Professor / Clinical Professor	6	2	2
Associate Professor	4	5	5
Assistant Professor	3	1	1
Senior Lecturer	32	24	24
Lecturer	25	23	24
Visiting Faculty	26	46	48
Senior Instructor	21	18	17
Instructor	22	18	20
Total Faculty	139	137	141

The overwhelming response was that it was positive to have faculty members from other higher education institutions. This provides peer learning benefits for staff and expanded learning and expertise to students. Visiting faculty are seen as a welcome addition to the faculty profile for new or updated programmes and are not seen as replacements for existing staff. While this model presents many advantages, the group of experts still noted that the focus or pathway was clearer with the degree programmes. The contribution of visiting faculty to the growth in research and the expertise of new researchers was less certain and required significant clarification. It was noted, however, that the procedures in place regarding ownership of research were clear, in that research published by visiting faculty in Les Roches was owned by the institution. The group of experts was pleased to note that Les Roches has identified that the

significant growth in the number of visiting faculty merits evaluation and encourages the institution to prioritise this in the context of the ratio of permanent to visiting faculty.

The group of experts assesses standard 4.2 as being largely fulfilled.

Recommendation #6: Ensure that the ratio of permanent to visiting faculty is conducive to the achievement of Les Roches' mission.

Standard 4.3: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector supports the career development of its entire staff, particularly the new generation of scientists.

Every member of staff is reviewed annually, which includes performance evaluations, salary reviews and internal promotions. These are managed as part of the individual annual talent performance review process, which maps to the quality assurance cycle used at Les Roches (see section 3) and is linked to the corporate plan. It is noted that Les Roches offers a range of support for the training and development of its staff through short, institution-wide online training programmes, financial support for staff engaged in external/formal education and training programmes, external providers hosting a range of training across both campuses and opportunities for mentoring and coaching. Faculty that are new to teaching are also provided with five half-days of training when joining Les Roches.

Faculty ranks and associated workloads are covered under the Faculty Development and Portfolio Review Policy. This policy provides a complete overview of a review process for faculty involving the completion of a portfolio with data relating to three areas of activity: (i) teaching, (ii) scholarly activity and (iii) services to the institution. The KPIs, which are set by HR based on previous performance, include student success, course evaluations, tutor reflections, peer observations of teaching and research output. The Faculty Council has recently completed a comprehensive overview of faculty workload to ensure that expectations of faculty in all areas of activity are explicit and based on a shared understanding. Individual workload documents are now set at the beginning of the semester, outlining specific allocations for teaching, scholarly activity and services to the institution in line with the policy. It is noted that the same process will be extended to the Marbella campus in 2024.

Although the group of experts could acknowledge the strong commitment of Les Roches to the professional development of staff, they did inquire whether there were specific institutional approaches to it at various points in their career. The faculty members confirmed that as part of the annual individual talent performance review process, staff can submit a request to be considered for promotion. While it was unclear to the experts what the criteria are, it was confirmed to the group that academic promotions are reliant on a strong portfolio of independent research (but with no specific number of peer-reviewed publications stated), expertise in teaching and programme development and a proven track record in student engagement. It was further confirmed that this would typically be accompanied by a reflective piece as supporting evidence.

In contrast, support for new-to-research faculty is managed separately by the research committee. The group of experts noted that 11 faculty members were currently undertaking a doctorate, where seven teaching faculty members have worked alongside them on shorter applied projects over the last three semesters to build up experience and expertise. In addition to the research handbook and flowchart for faculty, the Research Committee offers individual support to new faculty members looking to complete applications for ethical approval and



funding requests for research projects. Again, it was confirmed to the group of experts that “the needle is moving” on research at Les Roches. More faculty members are supported in undertaking research, and the leadership and direction of research has improved significantly with a drive underway to produce more research. A noticeable change was identified in the institution in its approach to research, with the numbers of faculty undertaking doctorates slowly rising. It is further acknowledged by the institution that its future direction and development relies on the growth of research. However, the group of experts observed that while there is support for faculty to undertake more research, there is no indication of what the trade-offs might be (e.g. hiring research assistants or compromising on one of the three areas of activities detailed above). While there has recently been a review of the Faculty Development and Portfolio Review Policy and during a similar timeframe the introduction of a research policy, the group of experts is concerned that there seems to be little or no collaboration between these parties to facilitate the nurturing of a research culture within faculty. The group of experts further noted that while research output is listed as a specific KPI, it is not highlighted under the three areas of activities in the Faculty Development and Portfolio Review Policy. However, the institution has signalled its intention to undertake a full review of the faculty body and culture in 2025. As part of this review, the group of experts advises the institution to consider the level of interaction and collaboration between constituent stakeholders and to develop an action plan that will enable potential promotions to be assessed more objectively. The group of experts also asked Les Roches to pay particular attention to promoting the younger generation of researchers. This includes ensuring a smooth alignment between areas in the governance structure (see standard 2.3, “Les Roches Governance Structure”).

The group of experts assesses standard 4.3 as being partially fulfilled.

Condition #8: Les Roches must establish promotion criteria for all its staff, and in particular for the new generation of scientists, as well as an action plan to enable promotions to be assessed objectively. These criteria should be communicated in a targeted manner.

## Area 5: Internal and external communication

Standard 5.1: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall make public its quality assurance strategy and ensure that the provisions corresponding to quality assurance processes and their results are known to employees, students and if necessary external stakeholders.

Les Roches has designated overall responsibility for dissemination of the quality assurance policy to the Management Committee, where a wide range of activities and tools are employed to support a strong culture and practice in quality assurance. Internally, there are a range of channels used to facilitate participation in quality assurance and the contribution by different stakeholders. For the student body, newsletters are communicated through the student portal, social media channels, messaging apps or generic email. For faculty members and professional staff, both the Faculty Council and Employee Committee coordinate the gathering and dissemination of information while simultaneously preserving anonymity. The various stakeholder groups addressed this, with the group of experts confirming that they considered that the institution went to great lengths through these channels to ensure good communication and a better understanding of quality assurance strategies and processes.

Communication of quality assurance results and associated information on the procedures and processes are available on the Les Roches website. The website is a central source of

information for both internal and external stakeholders and a central location for communicating all publicly available information relating to a range of quality assurance processes, including programme recognition and accreditation, QA rankings and ISO certification. Institutional policies and processes are also outlined here. Stakeholders, including students, are aware that the quality assurance strategy is evident in all processes at Les Roches, and they acknowledge that the website is a primary location for publishing results relating to feedback they have given through surveys and focus groups. While these results may refer to more high-level feedback, and to reports of KPIs or objectives linked to the strategic plan, the group of experts was interested to hear whether there were more tangible examples where students could see the direct impact of their feedback in quality assurance processes. One such example related to communicating changes to a programme currently accredited by NECHE. The students were provided with a rationale for proposed changes and could clearly see the benefits when they understood why changes had been made. The information was also provided in advance of any changes being applied and were not implemented mid-cycle. The group of experts was pleased to note that these types of changes, emerging based on stakeholder feedback, often flow bottom-up direction, so the outcome is more apparent.

Similar to internal stakeholders, external stakeholders also have designated channels in which information is communicated. For the Les Roches alumni community, they have a specific website, associated social media channels and newsletters. Sommet Education also uses a Microsoft Sharepoint hub to connect institutions on a range of topics, including quality assurance and KPI reporting.

Les Roches' communication strategy is based on an overview of the breadth and depth of communications with all stakeholders. The strategy has enabled the institution to categorise communications by stakeholder audience. The group of experts noted some of the identified strengths, which include a clear communication plan to (i) document the student journey from pre-admission to alumnus status, (ii) continue to nurture strong links with employers and industry partners and (iii) maintain a flexible public relations approach. The group of experts recognised that communication siloes exist at the departmental level and that the institution would benefit from a more unified voice in communicating with stakeholders. Les Roches has also identified this weakness and the need for a more robust internal communication plan to manage the volume of internal communication. The group of experts noted that this area is highlighted for improvement and recommends that the institution prioritise action in this area.

The group of experts assesses standard 5.1 as being largely fulfilled.

Recommendation #7: Develop a formal strategy to better manage the volume of internal communication and to convey consistent information to stakeholders about the quality assurance system, its results, and its revision.

Standard 5.2: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall regularly publish objective information about its activities, its study programmes and the qualifications awarded.

As highlighted in standard 5.1 above, Les Roches makes available and publishes objective information relating to all its activities. This information includes its programme portfolio with related qualifications on the website, an academic catalogue, programme brochures and a range of marketing resources, including videos, flyers and testimonials. Published materials and the website are managed by the marketing department, ensuring accuracy and consistency in the information provided.

It is noted that information relating to its programme portfolio comprises a programme description, admissions criteria, intake dates, tuition fees, programme duration and structure, internship and specialisation information, where appropriate, and campus location(s). Testimonials from alumni are also included here and the material is produced in an online format for ease of access. Related to this and in accordance with the ESG, the full academic catalogue including calendars is available online. The group of experts accepted that Les Roches has dedicated resources and tools for publishing and updating objective information, but it questioned whether this information was being regularly accessed and if it was appropriately signposted to facilitate ease of access. The experts acknowledged that the process of self-assessment did highlight some adjustments that would improve the distribution of information including (i) an updated institutional communication plan detailing more transversal responsibilities and (ii) a new file management system on Microsoft Azure, planned for 2025. They support this progress and recommend that Les Roches not wait to improve the external communication of its various activities.

The group of experts assesses standard 5.2 as being largely fulfilled.

Recommendation #8: Improve external communication about Les Roches' activities by communicating results, progress, reviews and general activities on the website and other available channels.

## **5 Outline of the strengths and challenges of the system and its overall assessment**

### **5.1 Strengths**

Les Roches has a long history of offering high level education and training in hospitality management. During its seventy-year history it has grown a solid reputation, both nationally and internationally, which continues to attract a diverse student population to the programmes it offers and the opportunities it can provide to graduates through its strong industry relations and employer engagement.

#### **Brand quality**

Les Roches exhibits a strong brand quality in both the programmes it offers and the graduates it produces, as evidenced by the demand of both students and employers through placement rates. The question arose during the review as to whether the institution sees a student as a client or a product, and the responses typically came back as both. Les Roches takes pride in providing transformative education and training to high-performing graduates, at the undergraduate and increasingly the postgraduate level, who have acquired the transferrable skills needed to navigate the global hospitality and event industries, which are rapidly changing.

#### **Student experience**

Les Roches offers a positive, genuine community feel on campus that has been strongly advocated by all internal constituent stakeholders. Two diverse campuses across two countries provide good potential and opportunities for mobility for both students and staff. The modern campus facilities are also a testament to the investment and commitment by both Les Roches itself and the support of its parent company, Sommet Education.

The feedback from students is overwhelmingly positive. The student culture, general support and open-door policy all contribute to student positivity in the opportunities afforded to them,

good engagement with the industry and the potential for employment opportunities. The alumni network and the willingness of the alumni to retain connections with the institute also confirm the longstanding and strong connections with the industry and employers.

### **Faculty expertise and commitment to strong programme development**

The group of experts commends the strong support and ambition of the faculty and staff at Les Roches. While some calls for more innovative didactical and pedagogical approaches to programme development were expressed, the group of experts recognise that there was strong support of the actions taken to update programmes and ensure that they are relevant, adaptable and responsive to evolving markets and trends. They also recognise the uniqueness and benefits of Spark Innovation Sphere and see it as an excellent example of a collaboration initiative to bridge the gap between education and industry. The strong collaboration and partnership networks between the institution and industry has strengthened the education and skills of students and is evident in the above-average career opportunities and high rates of employability that graduates of Les Roches enjoy. The group of experts congratulates Les Roches on the implementation of this initiative to bring together knowledge and practice and to provide a particular pathway for faculty to build up experience by linking with other collaborators and partners.

## **5.2 Weaknesses**

The group of experts has identified some opportunities for improvement in the following areas.

### **Incompleteness and complexity of the quality assurance system**

The group of experts commends the commitment and effort of Les Roches to continue fostering a quality culture across the organisation, but considers that a more simplified model which can be diffused more widely and recognised more easily by all constituent stakeholders needs to be developed. Essentially, the group of experts believes that an effective quality culture is – to put it simply – a habit and not an act. Les Roches clearly has a strong quality framework underpinned by policies and procedures to support quality management, but the experts insist that these should be extended to the entire institution. Indeed, the quality assurance system is interpreted as too informal and one that would benefit from more simplified and structured procedures. The group of experts also believes that communication gaps across the institution regarding the quality assurance system would benefit from a more uniform approach to institutional and measurable KPIs.

### **Financial sustainability**

As highlighted above, the group of experts commends Les Roches' agility and responsiveness to a rapidly changing and evolving global hospitality sector, but would have some concern regarding the economic sustainability of the changing business model from an undergraduate to postgraduate focus and the added issue regarding a Swiss cost base. The group of experts urges the institution to consider a plan for its future financial sustainability.

### **Research**

As mentioned above, the group of experts recognised that research has been a recent key focus area for Les Roches and that there is much to celebrate in the successful achievement of some significant milestones, such as the establishment of the Spark Innovation Sphere. However, the group of experts strongly insists that Les Roches now concentrates its efforts and investment in the formalisation of the research portfolio of its faculty members. There remains a

significant gap in the development of academic peer-reviewed research and an over-reliance on visiting faculty to fulfil this strategic priority. The group of experts believes that a systemic plan for research should be implemented to provide continual evidence (through data) of the growth and development of new scientists.

#### **Insufficient involvement of representative groups**

The group of experts noted that as Les Roches evolved as a higher education institution, decision-making roles in recent years have clearly been mapped (and updated) through the governance structure in line with strategic priorities, with responsibilities being attributed to a network of committees representing different stakeholder groups. While there has been some transversal representation across committees and communities of practice, the group of experts is aware of the gaps still in place. In particular, the experts are aware of inadequate diversity among stakeholders and a greater need and awareness to include the participation of all representative groups across committees and constituent stakeholders, i.e. visiting faculty. The experts strongly urge Les Roches to consider all constituent stakeholders across its committee structures and to ensure that these have sufficient, meaningful representation.

#### **Promoting equal opportunities and gender equality**

The group of experts recognised the commitment by Les Roches to ensure that practices related to diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) are reflected in its values, policies and KPIs. However, the group of experts was concerned by the insufficient level of gender diversity across committee structures, which often did not reflect the current institutional ratio of 60:40. The experts strongly advise Les Roches to address – as a priority – disparities in committee structures at all levels, including the Governing Board, and to ensure a collective understanding of the DEI policy and practices across both campuses in Les Roches. The experts believe that Les Roches needs to demonstrate greater action in this area to ensure that genuine equal opportunities become embedded within the quality culture of the institution.

#### **Insufficiently formalised promotion of staff, especially young researchers**

The group of experts acknowledged the strong commitment of Les Roches to the professional development of its staff and the processes in place for performance evaluations to ensure that appropriate KPIs can be met. However, the experts did express concern as to whether there were sufficient and appropriate institutional approaches that targeted the professional development needs of staff at various points in their career. While they support the planned review of the faculty body and culture in 2025, they strongly encourage Les Roches to quickly develop an action plan that will lead to a more formalised approach to potential promotions, paying particular attention to the younger generation of researchers.

## **6 Recommendations for the future development of quality assurance**

### **Area 1: Quality assurance strategy**

#### Standard 1.2:

Recommendation #1: Reduce the number of KPIs and ensure associated goals are SMART (i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and have clearly assigned owners to support the development of the Les Roches' strategy more effectively.

Standard 1.4:

Recommendation #2: Update the formalisation of the quality assurance system review, so that it becomes aligned with the institution's current strategic timetable and can more effectively support future strategic planning and accreditation cycles.

**Area 2: Governance**

Standard 2.4:

Recommendation #3: Link economic, social and environmental sustainability objectives to a precise timeline as per recommendation #1 under Standard 1.2.

**Area 3: Teaching, research and services**

Standard 3.1:

Recommendation #4: Increase the amount of time dedicated to research, establish a budget line for the necessary funds dedicated to research, ensure that all of those involved in research publish, participate in colloquia or conferences.

**Area 4: Resources**

Standard 4.1:

Recommendation #5: Ensure that the economic model of Les Roches is responsive to changes in business conditions.

Standard 4.2:

Recommendation #6: Ensure that the ratio of permanent to visiting faculty is conducive to the achievement of Les Roches' mission.

**Area 5: Internal and external communication**

Standard 5.1:

Recommendation #7: Develop a formal strategy to better manage the volume of internal communication and to convey consistent information to stakeholders about the quality assurance system, its results, and its revision.

Standard 5.2:

Recommendation #8: Improve external communication about Les Roches' activities by communicating results, progress, reviews and general activities on the website and other available channels.

## 7 Accreditation proposal of the group of experts

Based on the self-assessment report of the Les Roches Global Hospitality Education of 15 November 2023 and on the on-site visit that took place from 12 to 13 March 2024, the group of experts recommends that AAQ grant Les Roches Global Hospitality Education accreditation subject to the following conditions:

### Area 1: Quality assurance strategy

#### Standard 1.2:

Condition #1: Les Roches must redefine its quality assurance system so that it takes account of all the institution's activities specific to its type and thus fully supports the realisation of its mandate by setting SMART KPIs.

### Area 2: Governance

#### Standard 2.1:

Condition #2: Les Roches must simplify the organisational structure of its quality assurance system so that processes are explicit and the institution can evaluate the performance of its goals and achieve its strategic objectives.

#### Standard 2.3:

Condition #3: Les Roches must draw up participation rules to cover all its representative groups (including visiting faculty) on the various committees and ensure measurable diversity of representation on its Governing Board.

#### Standard 2.5:

Condition #4: Les Roches must establish a clear policy for promoting equal opportunities and actual gender equality, define precise objectives in this area and an action plan for achieving them. The institution must also ensure that this policy is communicated and understood by employees and students of both campuses.

### Area 3: Teaching, research and services

#### Standard 3.1:

Condition #5: Les Roches must establish a strategy and action plan to ensure that the institution continues to develop its own research, integrating the increase in the number of its own researchers and incorporating a significant amount of peer-reviewed research.

#### Standard 3.2:

Condition #6: Les Roches must put in place a holistic system for evaluating its activities, in particular for teaching and research activities.

Standard 3.4:

Condition #7: Les Roches must modify its diplomas (to include the appropriate title and correct number of ECTS credits) and admission requirements so that they scrupulously comply with the HEdA (Ch. 4, Art. 25) and its Accreditation Ordinance (Section 1, Art. 2 and Section 2, Art. 4). These changes must be clearly communicated to prospective students and all stakeholders through the institution's website, published materials and all other forms of public communication.

**Area 4: Resources**

Standard 4.3:

Condition #8: Les Roches must establish promotion criteria for all its staff, and in particular for the new generation of scientists, as well as an action plan to enable promotions to be assessed objectively. These criteria should be communicated in a targeted manner.

The group of experts envisages a time horizon of two years for the fulfilment of the conditions; the review is to take place within the framework of a brief on-site visit (1 day) with 3 experts.





## **Section D**

# **Position statement of the Les Roches Global Hospitality Education**

5 July 2024



# Les Roches

AAQ  
Effingerstrasse 15,  
P.O. Box  
3001 Bern  
Switzerland

Crans Montana, 5 July 2024

Dear Mr. Grolimund,

I hereby confirm receipt of the external evaluation report together with the AAQ proposal for the accreditation of Les Roches Global Hospitality Education.

Les Roches appreciates the care, respect and attention to detail demonstrated by the experts both during the visit and in the external evaluation report. On behalf of the Governing Board, I agree with the findings and recommendations of the report.

The proposed conditions, most of which are aligned with the Action Plan for the Development of the Quality Assurance System at the end of the SAR, will be addressed in accordance with the two-year timeline proposed by the AAQ. Each of the proposed conditions is addressed individually in the annex.

Les Roches remains committed to the ongoing improvement of its policies and practices to ensure the delivery of its mission and strategic goals while complying with the requirements of the HEdA Accreditation Ordinance as a University of Applied Sciences Institute.



Carlos Diez de la Lastra Buigues  
General Manager

Annex: Comments on proposed conditions



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## **Annex: Comments on proposed conditions**

### **Area 1: Quality assurance strategy**

#### Standard 1.2:

Condition #1: Les Roches must redefine its quality assurance system so that it takes account of all the institution's activities specific to its type and thus fully supports the realization of its mandate by setting SMART KPIs.

Les Roches' comments: The proposed condition is aligned with the Action Plan for the Development of the Quality Assurance System (see SAR).

### **Area 2: Governance**

#### Standard 2.1:

Condition #2: Les Roches must simplify the organizational structure of its quality assurance system so that processes are explicit and the institution can evaluate the performance of its goals and achieve its strategic objectives.

Les Roches' comments: The proposed condition is aligned with the Action Plan for the Development of the Quality Assurance System (see SAR), particularly regarding organizational structure. Les Roches will review its approach to framing students and alumni in its decision-making processes. Les Roches will also endeavor to further develop its relationships with regional institutions.

#### Standard 2.3:

Condition #3: Les Roches must draw up participation rules to cover all its representative groups (including visiting faculty) on the various committees and ensure measurable diversity of representation on its Governing Board.

Les Roches' comments: The proposed condition is aligned with the Action Plan for the Development of the Quality Assurance System (see SAR) particularly regarding the role of visiting faculty in institutional governance.

#### Standard 2.5:

Condition #4: Les Roches must establish a clear policy for promoting equal opportunities and actual gender equality, define precise objectives in this area and an action plan for achieving them. The institution must also ensure that this policy is communicated and understood by employees and students of both campuses.

Les Roches' comments: The proposed condition is in line with the Action Plan for the Development of the Quality Assurance System (see SAR) regarding gender pay equity and Les Roches will review the gender balance of all constituent committees.

### **Area 3: Teaching, research and services**

#### Standard 3.1:

Condition #5: Les Roches must establish a strategy and action plan to ensure that the institution continues to develop its own research, integrating the increase in the number of its own researchers and incorporating a significant amount of peer-reviewed research.



Les Roches' comments: Les Roches particularly appreciates the detailed recommendations of the experts regarding the enhancement of the institutional research strategy and the proposed condition is in line with the Action Plan for the Development of the Quality Assurance System (see SAR).

Standard 3.2:

Condition #6: Les Roches must put in place a holistic system for evaluating its activities, in particular for teaching and research activities.

Les Roches comments: Les Roches acknowledges a need for a more robust and comprehensive approach to the evaluation of research activities but is surprised that the proposed condition extends to the evaluation of teaching, for which processes and mechanisms are mature and well-established.

Standard 3.4:

Condition #7: Les Roches must modify its diplomas (to include the appropriate title and correct number of ECTS credits) and admission requirements so that they scrupulously comply with the HEdA (ch. 4, art. 25) and its accreditation Ordinance (sec. 1, art. 2 and sec. 2, art. 4). These changes must be clearly communicated to prospective students and all stakeholders through the institution's website, published materials and all other forms of public communication.

Les Roches comments: Les Roches is fully committed to complying with the HEdA accreditation ordinance. This is evidenced in the successful implementation of an integrated year of work experience before entering the bachelor, which may not have been sufficiently explained to the experts. Les Roches acknowledges that there may be some confusion regarding compliance with the number of ECTS credits awarded and will rectify this in its communications. Regarding the titles of awards, Les Roches has complied with the cantonal authority's requirement that degree titles awarded by Les Roches cannot use the Bachelor of Science and Master of Science titles until University of Applied Science Institute status is granted by the Swiss Accreditation Council.

#### **Area 4: Resources**

Standard 4.3:

Condition #8: Les Roches must establish promotion criteria for all its staff, and in particular for the new generation of scientists, as well as an action plan to enable promotions to be assessed objectively. These criteria should be communicated in a targeted manner.

Les Roches comments: Les Roches acknowledges the detailed observations of the expert report and will integrate these into a revision of the Faculty Development and Portfolio Review Policy.



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