

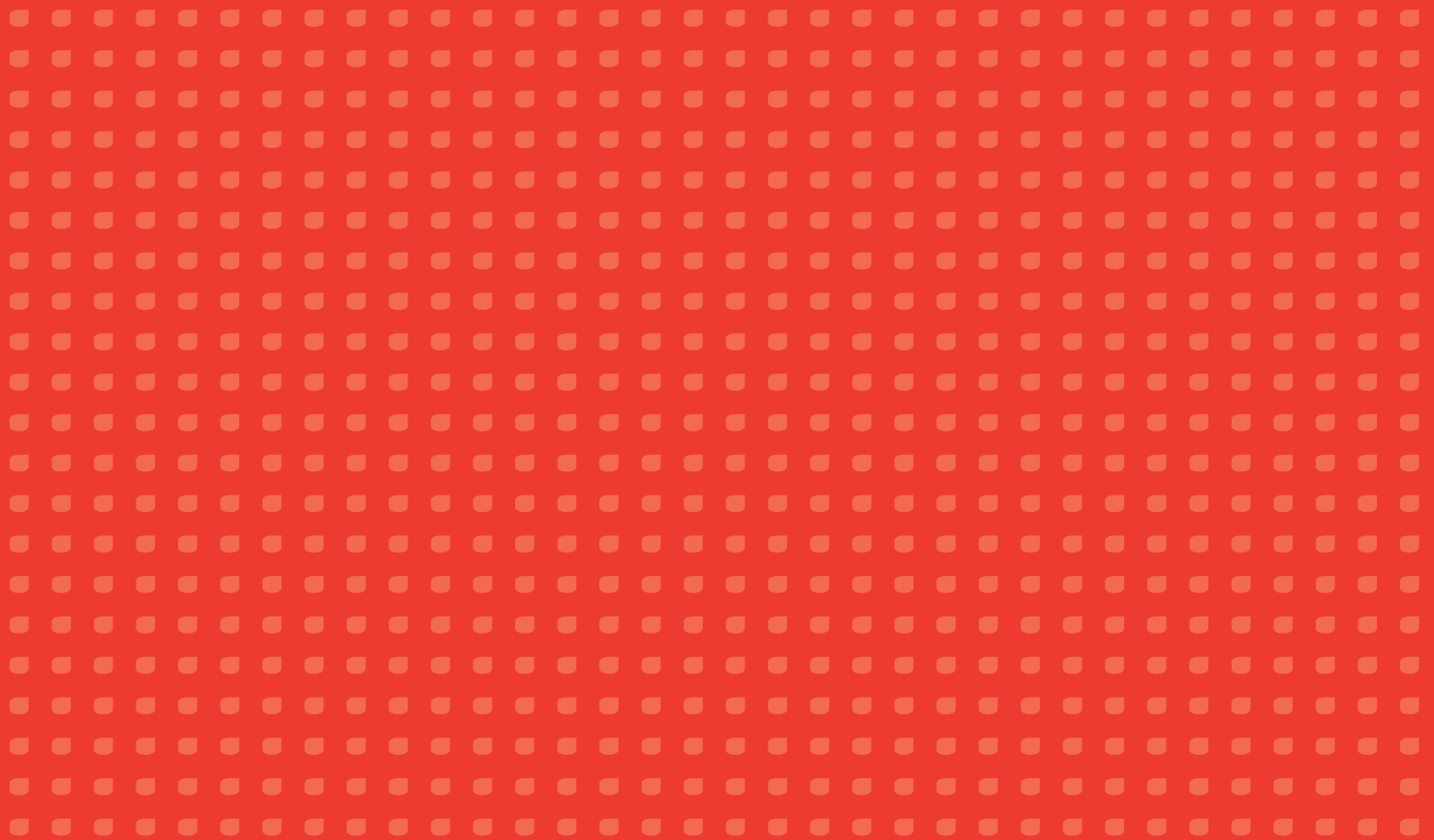


schweizerische agentur
für akkreditierung
und qualitätssicherung

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swiss agency of
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quality assurance



Institutional accreditation César Ritz Colleges Switzerland

External assessment report | 17 January 2024



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Section A

Decision of the Swiss Accreditation Council

29 November 2023





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



Section B

Proposal of the agency

17 May 2023



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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 different 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 the purpose of 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 argumentation of the group of experts is coherent, i.e. related to the standard and evidence-based, and ensures consistency with previous processes.

AAQ does not comment on the recommendations of the group of experts. AAQ sees recommendations as part of the peer review process: recommendations are suggestions by the group of experts that indicate possible paths for quality enhancement. AAQ attaches importance to higher education institutions demonstrating in their self-evaluation reports how they have dealt with recommendations from previous procedures. However, the recommendations are not legally binding and do not have to be implemented.

1 César Ritz Colleges Switzerland (CRCS)

Founded in 1982, César Ritz Colleges Switzerland (CRCS) is a private institution that is part of the Swiss Education Group (SEG) portfolio of hospitality schools. CRCS operates on a shared governance model, based on the participation of different committees that ensure the involvement of all stakeholders of the institution.

Spread over two campuses, one in Brig and the other in Le Bouveret, the institution presents itself as a leading hospitality school with a mission to combine the Swiss tradition of hospitality with business education. The college offers a Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management in cooperation with Washington State University (WSU) and a Master's degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management in partnership with the University of Derby (UoD).

In 2022, CRCS had 638 students of 40 different nationalities. The college has 103 staff members. Of these, six are associate professors with PhDs, five are full-time lecturers, ten are part-time lecturers and one is a visiting lecturer from WSU.

This is the second time that CRCS has sought institutional accreditation, the first attempt having been made in 2010.

2 Legislation

Federal Act of 30 September 2011 on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (Higher Education Act, HEdA), SR 414.20.

Under the Higher Education Act (HEdA) of 30 September 2011, institutional accreditation is a prerequisite for all higher education institutions – as well as all other institutions in the higher education sector, both public and private – using the designation “university”, “university of applied sciences” or “university of teacher education” (Art. 29 HEdA), and for applying for federal funding (Art. 45 HEdA).

Ordinance of the Higher Education Council of 28 May 2015 on Accreditation in Higher Education (Accreditation Ordinance HEdA), SR 414.205.3.

The Accreditation Ordinance (HEdA) of 28 May 2015 specifies the requirements for accreditation pursuant to Article 30 HEdA; it specifies the procedural rules and the quality standards.

3 Facts

CRCS applied for institutional accreditation as a Swiss University Institute of Applied Sciences pursuant to Article 8 Paragraph 1 of the Accreditation Ordinance on 15 July 2021.

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

CRCS chose English as the language through which the procedure would be conducted in accordance with Article 9 Paragraph 7 of the Accreditation Ordinance. Both the 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 September 2021, the Accreditation Council decided to accept the application by CRCS on the basis of Article 4 Paragraph 2 of the Accreditation Ordinance and forwarded the application documents to AAQ.

AAQ opened the proceedings on 16 November 2021.

On 6 December 2022, AAQ informed CRCS of the composition of the group of experts, which comprised the following (in alphabetical order):

- Krumma Jonsdottir
General Manager, École Ferrières Paris, France
- Prof. Dr. Andreas Liebrich
Professor of Tourism, Hochschule Luzern
- Prof. Dr. Liliane Michalik
Vice-President, Université de Lausanne (peer leader)
- Prof. Dr. Patricia Pol
Former Vice-President, Université Paris-Est, France
- Fanny Tang
Student M.Sc. in Management Orientation Strategy, Organization & Leadership,
Université de Lausanne

On the basis of the SAR of 15 December 2022 and the on-site visit of 6–7 March 2023 (which was preceded by a preliminary visit on 7 February), the expert peer group considered whether the accreditation requirements pursuant to Article 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 CRCS for comment on 17 May 2023.

AAQ received CRCS’s comments on the expert peer group’s report and AAQ’s accreditation proposal on 16 June 2023.

On 17 May 2023, AAQ proposed to the Accreditation Council that CRCS be accredited as a “Swiss University Institute of Applied Sciences”.

4 Considerations

4.1 Assessment and accreditation recommendation by the group of experts

In both its final presentation of the strengths and challenges of the institution’s quality assurance system and in its overall assessment, the group of experts points out a number of positive elements: the dedication of the faculty and staff and the institution’s ambition in striving for accreditation; the open culture of communication evident within the institution; the investment that has been made in physical resources; and the institution’s relationships with partner universities and with industry.

At the same time the group of experts points out a number of notable challenges: the complexity of the quality assurance system; the unclear relationship between CRCS and CAAS; the implementation of the admission requirements for universities of applied sciences; the early stage at which the institution’s research activities find themselves; the setting and implementation of goals regarding sustainability; the setting and implementation of goals regarding equal opportunities and gender equality; and some incomplete and complex aspects of communication.

Overall, in its analyses and evaluation, the group of experts concludes that CRCS has a quality assurance system that covers all 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:

- Governance (Art. 30 para. 1. letter a item 3; standard 2.1)
- Sustainability (Art. 30 para. 1. letter a item 6, standard 2.4)
- Equal opportunities and true gender equality (Art. 30 para. 1. letter a item 5, standard 2.5)
- Research (Art. 30 para. 1 letter a item 1; standard 3.1)
- Admission requirements under Article 24 HEdA (Art. 30 para. 1 letter a item 1; standard 3.4)
- Promotion of junior faculty members (Standard 4.3)

- Communication (Art. 30 para. 1 letter a item 7; standard 5.1)

Consequently, the group of experts recommends eight conditions:

In its analysis of standard 2.1, the group of experts concludes that CRCS has made progress in recent years in developing and implementing a quality assurance system. The group of experts is convinced that there is potential to bring real structure and strategic management to CRCS's quality assurance system, but notes that this process will take time. The group of experts recommends "that CRCS further systematise and formalise its processes for collecting, analysing and implementing feedback. This will allow the institution to ensure that the entire PDCA cycle is implemented more systematically in all areas of its operations and activities." Based on this analysis the group of experts assess standard 2.1 as being "partially fulfilled" and formulates a condition:

Condition 1 (re standard 2.1)

CRCS simplifies and reorganises the quality assurance system and associated processes, ensuring their systematisation and formalisation, to improve their anchoring, implementation and communication and to guarantee robust decision-making processes.

In its analysis of standard 2.4, the group of experts concludes that CRCS has established goals regarding sustainability in the form of the Sustainability Management Plan (SMP), but observes that these goals have either not been implemented or that their implementation is incomplete: ecological sustainability refers mainly to activity on the Bouveret campus; goals for social sustainability are only implicitly covered in the SMP; and, economically, CRCS had to rely on its parent company (SEG) in order to deal with the financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this analysis the group of experts assesses standard 2.4 as being "partially fulfilled" and formulates a condition:

Condition 2 (re standard 2.4):

CRCS defines an action plan derived from its institutional strategy to ensure social, economic and ecological sustainability and ensures its implementation and monitoring on both campuses.

In its analysis of standard 2.5, the group of experts concludes that CRCS actively embraces diversity, but lacks an understanding of "equal opportunities and true gender equality" in the eyes of the law (Article 30 HEdA). Furthermore, the group of experts assesses the "Educate, Communicate, Celebrate" strategy to be framed at a very high level and to lack substance. Based on this analysis the group of experts assesses standard 2.5 as being "partially fulfilled" and formulates a condition:

Condition 3 (standard 2.5):

CRCS establishes an action plan for the promotion of equal opportunity and gender equality derived from its institutional strategy and ensures its implementation and monitoring on both campuses.

In its analysis of standard 3.1, the group of experts notes that "Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland (CAAS) originated as a programme of CRCS but has now developed into a separate department. However, it continues to share its legal identity with CRCS. The two entities are also inextricably linked in terms of operations, personnel and finances. This dependence between the two parties is a significant obstacle to accreditation. CAAS awards degrees in a professional discipline (Bachelor of Arts in Culinary Arts and Master of Arts in Culinary Business Management). However, such degrees for professional programmes do not comply with Article 12 of the Ordinance coordinating the education of accredited HEI." To

overcome the obstacle of the link between the two institutions, the expert group formulates a condition:

Condition 4 (re standard 3.1):

CRCS renames the degrees awarded by CAAS in accordance with the legal requirements in Switzerland, or carries out the complete separation of CRCS and Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland (CAAS) to ensure that the institutions are totally independent at all levels (legal, administrative, financial, etc.).

Furthermore, in its analysis the group of experts notes that CRCS has commenced work on developing a research culture within the institution. However, the group of experts observes “that further investment in resources for research is absolutely essential. This includes the safeguarding of a minimum reasonable proportion of time for research by the associate professors.” Based on this analysis, the group of experts assesses standard 3.1 as being “partially fulfilled” and formulates a condition:

Condition 5 (re standard 3.1):

CRCS establishes a clear plan of action to provide appropriate conditions for research and to ensure that research is nurtured and continues to develop (e.g. CRCS could increase the amount of protected time dedicated to research and insert this percentage into the job description, establish a clear budget line for the necessary funds dedicated to research or ensure that all of those involved in research publish, participate in colloquia or conferences and present peer-reviewed results). CRCS also creates an enabling environment that ensures researchers have access to the necessary resources (i.e. relevant databases, funding for conference participation, etc.).

In their analysis of standard 3.4, the group of experts states that “CRCS does not respect the criteria for admission to the Universities of Applied Sciences provided for by the HEdA, ch. 4, art. 25.” Specifically, CRCS admits holders of a baccalaureate (or an equivalent diploma) without requiring one year of professional experience. Based on this analysis the group of experts assesses standard 3.4 as being “partially fulfilled” and formulates a condition:

Condition 6 (re standard 3.4):

CRCS ensures that the admission criteria for the Swiss University of Applied Sciences within the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (HEdA), ch. 4, art. 25, are respected and clearly communicated. In particular, CRCS expects its applicants to have one year of professional experience in a related profession.

In their analysis of standard 4.3, the group of experts concludes that “details of the professional development opportunities available to early-career researchers to develop skills and competence, and of specific criteria that must be met to facilitate promotion were not evident within the Faculty Handbook, nor was adequate detail provided during the on-site visit.” Based on this analysis the group of experts assesses standard 4.5 as being “partially fulfilled” and formulates a condition:

Condition 7 (re standard 4.3):

CRCS establishes a concept for the promotion and career development of junior faculty and ensures that it is communicated effectively.

In their analysis of standard 5.1, the group of experts concludes that CRCS’s Communication Strategy 2023 is not yet complete and that the internal communications plan for 2023 is yet to

be determined. For the group of experts, this constitutes a considerable deficit in the implementation of standard 5.1. Based on this analysis, the group of experts assesses standard 5.1 as being “partially fulfilled”.

In their analysis of standard 5.2, the group of experts observes that “the tone of the website and of other communications to external stakeholders is quite promotional.” Furthermore, they observe “a lack of transparency and openness in CRCS’s communication.” Based on this analysis, the group of experts assesses standard 5.2 as being “partially fulfilled”.

The expert group formulates a condition that will serve to improve compliance with the two standards, 5.1 and 5.2:

Condition 8 (re standards 5.1 and 5.2):

CRCS finalizes and implements its communication strategy (internal and external) and ensures that the information it provides is transparent, complete, well-structured and honest.

The group of experts proposes that CRCS be given 36 months to fulfil the conditions. The group of experts proposes that fulfilment of the conditions be assessed by means of a shortened site-visit (a half day) by three experts.

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

AAQ states that the expert group 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 further notes that the proposed conditions are appropriate to ensure the identified need for further development of the quality assurance system.

However, AAQ aligns the formulation of all conditions to the phrase “CRCS must ...”.

AAQ supports the proposal of the group of experts to allow CRCS 36 months to fulfil the conditions imposed. Given the range of standards concerned, AAQ believes a site visit of one full day instead of half a day is more appropriate.

5 Accreditation proposal

AAQ states that CRCS meets the requirements of Article 30 HEEdA for institutional accreditation as a University of Applied Sciences Institute:

– *Article 30 para. 1 letters a and c*

The group of experts’ analysis of the standards in relation to the Accreditation Ordinance shows that CRCS fulfils the requirements according to letter a items 1–7 as well as letter c, or will have fulfilled them after fulfilling the conditions.

– *Article 30 para. 1 letter b*

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

Based on the Self-assessment Report of César Ritz Colleges Switzerland, the analysis in the report of the expert group, the accreditation proposal of the group of experts and the position statement of CRCS, AAQ proposes that accreditation be granted to CRCS as a University of Applied Sciences Institute with eight conditions:

Condition 1 (re standard 2.1)

CRCS must simplify and reorganise the quality assurance system and associated processes, ensuring their systematisation and formalisation, to improve their anchoring, implementation and communication and to guarantee robust decision-making processes.

Condition 2 (re standard 2.4):

CRCS must define an action plan derived from its institutional strategy to ensure social, economic and ecological sustainability and must ensure its implementation and monitoring on both campuses.

Condition 3 (standard 2.5):

CRCS must establish an action plan for the promotion of equal opportunity and gender equality derived from its institutional strategy and must ensure its implementation and monitoring on both campuses.

Condition 4 (re standard 3.1)

CRCS must rename the degrees awarded by CAAS in accordance with the legal requirements in Switzerland, or must carry out the complete separation of CRCS and Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland (CAAS) to ensure that the institutions are totally independent at all levels (legal, administrative, financial, etc.).

Condition 5 (re standard 3.1)

CRCS must establish a clear plan of action to provide appropriate conditions for research and to ensure that research is nurtured and continues to develop (e.g. CRCS could increase the amount of protected time dedicated to research and insert this percentage into the job description, establish a clear budget line for the necessary funds dedicated to research or ensure that all of those involved in research publish, participate in colloquia or conferences and present peer-reviewed results). CRCS must also create an enabling environment that ensures researchers have access to the necessary resources (i.e. relevant databases, funding for conference participation, etc.).

Condition 6 (re standard 3.4)

CRCS must ensure that the admission criteria for the Swiss University of Applied Sciences within the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (HEdA), ch. 4, art. 25, are respected and clearly communicated. In particular, CRCS must expect its applicants to have one year of professional experience in a related profession.

Condition 7 (re standard 4.3):

CRCS must establish a concept for the promotion and career development of junior faculty and must ensure that it is communicated effectively.

Condition 8 (re standards 5.1 and 5.2):

CRCS must finalize and implement its communication strategy (internal and external) and must ensure that the information it provides is transparent, complete, well-structured and honest.



AAQ proposes that allowing a period of 36 months is reasonable for the fulfilment of the conditions.

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



Section C

Expert report

28 April 2023

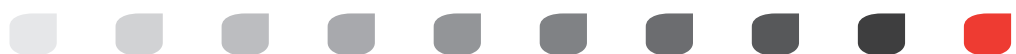




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1. César Ritz Colleges Switzerland: Brief description

Led by Dean Tanja Florenthal, and forming part of the [Swiss Education Group \(SEG\)](https://www.swisseducation.com/en/)¹ portfolio of hospitality schools, César Ritz Colleges Switzerland (CRCS) is a private higher education institution (HEI) that operates across two campuses, both based in the canton of Valais – one in Brig and one in Le Bouveret. The institution presents itself as a “leading hospitality school with entrepreneurship and sustainability at its heart” with the ambition of positioning itself as an “outstanding hospitality and tourism teaching and research institution that has strong, clear industry and academic ties, both regionally and internationally” (Self-assessment Report [SAR], p. 5).

CRCS was established in 1982 as HOTELCONSULT Swiss Hotel and Catering Colleges with the mission of combining the Swiss tradition of hospitality with business education. In 1986, the Ritz family agreed to allow the name of César Ritz to be used by the college.

The Self-assessment Report (SAR) notes that CRCS’s development to date can be divided into **two** distinct phases and that the commencement of a third phase is envisaged: The **first** of these saw the launch of CRCS’s bachelor’s programme in hotel management (the first to be offered in Switzerland) in cooperation with Washington State University (WSU). This was followed by the launch of a postgraduate diploma in hotel management in 1986.

The SAR marks the beginning of the **second** phase of development as 2011, with the acquisition of CRCS by CRCS’s parent company, the Swiss Education Group Holding AG (SEG). Since then, CRCS has been one of four hospitality schools in SEG’s portfolio, which also includes the Swiss Hotel Management School (SHMS), Hotel Institute Montreux (HIM) and the Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland (CAAS).

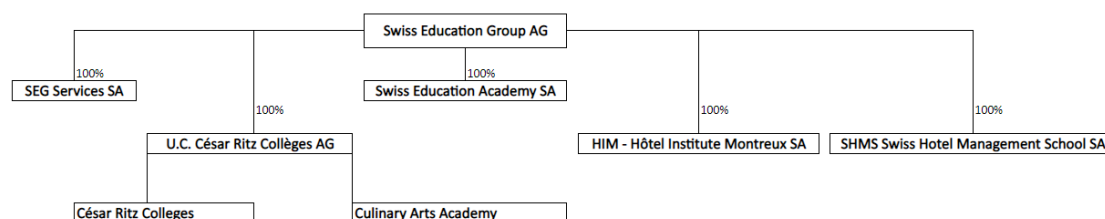


Fig. 1: SEG Group structure

Following its initial attempt to attain institutional accreditation in 2010, CRCS established a shared governance model within the institution. The model is based upon collective decision-making by a number of committees that ensure the participation of all institutional stakeholders and is described in more detail in the next section. Although CRCS “benefits from the services of SEG” like all of the other schools in the group, the college must “remain independent with organizational and governance decision-making powers at the College and operational levels” (SAR, p. 4). However, SEG may act as a temporary sponsor if necessary. In recent years, CRCS has relied on such sponsorship, with the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacting the institution’s enrolment (down 43% in 2021, and down 8% in 2022; 5.02. CRCS Key Performance Indicator Dashboard), which has put CRCS in deficit.

The SAR confirms CRCS’s intention to embark on its **third** phase of development by achieving accreditation as a Swiss University Institute of Applied Sciences. If successful, CRCS would be the first institution in the SEG group to be accredited. Accreditation would also place CRCS on

¹ <https://www.swisseducation.com/en/>

the list of schools for which students can receive scholarships, which is an important factor for attracting students from the Middle East, China, and elsewhere in Asia.

CRCS currently offers two programmes – one at undergraduate level and one at postgraduate level. Each of these is a partnership with an overseas institution: the bachelor's programme in hospitality business administration is delivered in partnership with WSU at both the Le Bouveret and Brig campuses, while the master's programme in hospitality and tourism management is delivered in partnership with the University of Derby (UoD), solely on the Brig campus. CRCS's average graduation rate is 66%, meaning that over 30% of students elect to leave the institution before completing their qualification.

At the time of submission of the SAR, CRCS counted 638 full-time students in its student body, comprising 56% female students and 40 nationalities). The college has 103 members of staff. Of these, six are associate professors with PhDs, five are full-time teaching faculty, 10 are part-time faculty, and one is a visiting faculty member from WSU.

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

This is CRCS's second application for Swiss federal institutional accreditation. The first application was made in 2010, following a decision by CRCS's Supervisory Board that achieving Swiss federal accreditation would be a long-term priority for CRCS. One aim of doing so was to ensure that CRCS's qualifications would be recognised by foreign governmental authorities and higher education institutions. CRCS's 2010 application was unsuccessful and, in making its determination, the Swiss Accreditation Council recommended a number of areas for improvement. In summary, the council recommended that CRCS:

- Increase the percentage of faculty members teaching theory courses with PhD degrees,
- Formalise a quality assurance strategy,
- Articulate a shared governance model,
- Internationalise the college's research activities and
- Strengthen CRCS's connections with the Swiss and European higher education systems by formalising ECTS credits and EU partnerships.

CRCS has considered these recommendations and taken action in recent years. The SAR notes the actions taken by CRCS to address the areas identified for improvement by the Swiss Accreditation Council, including:

- Increasing the percentage of faculty members holding PhDs from 25% in 2011 to 60% in 2021,
- Developing a QA strategy, which was last updated in 2021,
- Developing a shared governance model, which was last updated in 2021,
- Working to increase the amount of research within the institution and appointing a head of research in 2021 and
- Implementing ECTS credits in autumn 2022 and entering into a partnership with Universidad Europea de Valencia for business trips.

In parallel with these improvements, CRCS states in its SAR its willingness to improve its programmes and to have them recognised by various authorities. It regularly submits its study programmes to external quality review and accreditation processes. In recent years, various authorities have participated in the recognition of its courses, such as THE-ICE, EduQua, the Valais Higher Education and the UNWTO Certified Program.

THE-ICE recommendations

The International Centre of Excellence in Hospitality and Tourism Education (THE-ICE) provides accreditation for institutions “offering TH&E (tourism, hospitality, events and culinary arts) education programmes of a standard regarded by their peers as espousing excellence in education”.² Accreditation is offered for a five-year period, and CRCS renewed its accreditation with THE-ICE in 2019.

The SAR refers to some of the recommendations arising from the THE-ICE evaluation process and notes that these have been “taken into consideration and acted upon”:

- Improving the consistent and transparent description of competence-orientated learning outcomes for all courses (THE-ICE),
- Further utilising the University of Derby partnership for benchmarking (THE-ICE) and
- Conducting an evaluation of the new “direction” (e.g. regionality) of CRCS’s Panel of Experts and its impact on the quality of CRCS education (THE-ICE).

Valais Higher Education’s recommendations

For several years, CRCS has maintained regular exchanges with the Canton of Valais. These have led the State Council to recognise the instruction offered by CRCS, but the State Council has also asked CRCS to “explicitly inform students and future students, in particular through the documentation accessible online, that the diplomas issued are not Swiss academic titles and do not give automatic access to the Swiss domain of higher education”. Obtaining institutional accreditation is particularly important in this sense, as it will allow for the recognition of CRCS’s degrees.

3. Quality assurance system of César Ritz Colleges Switzerland

The SAR describes the CRCS quality assurance framework (QAF) as an iterative process aligned to CRCS’s strategic priorities and guiding the college’s implementation of quality measures across all of its activities, both operational and academic. CRCS’s quality assurance strategy is based upon the following principles:

- Procedures and processes are in place to improve the quality of activities.
- It is the responsibility of all stakeholders of CRCS to ensure the implementation of quality assurance in their practice and improve through a systematic and periodic process.
- Effective communication is essential to a successful quality assurance system.
- The QAF is transparent and premised on self-evaluation.
- External feedback strengthens the college.
- Two of CRCS’s most central questions are: “Are students learning what they should?” and “Are students career-ready?”

The QAF document details a quality improvement cycle that follows the PDCA method and can be applied to activity at all levels within CRCS – i.e. at individual, operational and college level (QAF, pp. 4-5).

² <https://the-ice.org/what-we-do-2/accreditation/the-ice-standards-of-excellence/>

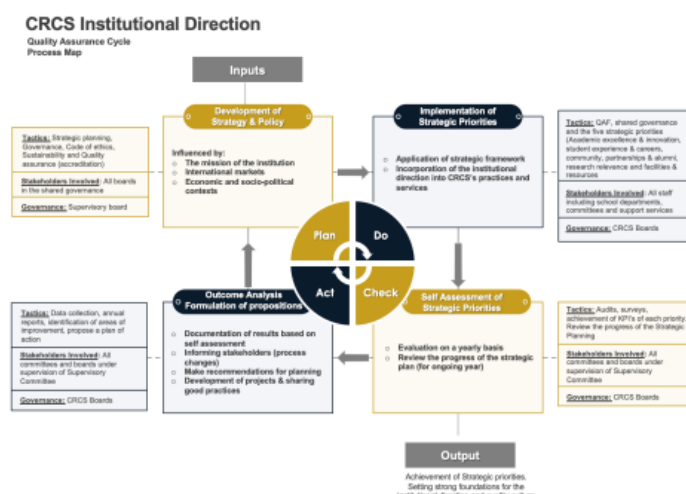


Fig. 2: A process map of CRCS's quality assurance cycle as it relates to CRCS's institutional direction (QAF, p. 4)

CRCS's quality assessment framework is based on a shared governance model in which the decision-making of various committees ensures the participation of all stakeholders. CRCS has a shared commitment to continuous quality improvement, with the Supervisory Board "through its internal committees [–] constantly monitor[ing] and consider[ing] evidence on how effectively it is accomplishing the organizational purpose and objectives" (Quality Assurance Framework [QAF, p. 3]). Thus, the achievement of the institution's mission is measured, in accordance with the quality assurance system, through a set of time-bound key performance indicators (KPIs). These indicators are monitored, and, when they are not met, corrective action is taken.

The QAF states that the model used should be reviewed every two years through an internal process led by the Quality Committee. This review includes consideration of the framework, the quality cycle, relevant KPIs, process maps and the effectiveness of annual reporting. It is intended to assess the effectiveness of CRCS's QAF, shared governance model and delegations of authority to identify any improvements that might enhance the overall effectiveness of governance. An external governance review is scheduled every five years. The purpose of this review is to verify CRCS's ability to ensure the quality of its own educational operations.

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.

As noted above in Section 3, CRCS has a quality assurance framework (QAF) in place. The QAF is intended to guide the implementation of CRCS's quality assurance strategy and system across the institution. It contains a number of quality assurance maps that are directly linked

with the institution's identified strategic priorities for 2022–2025 and which are also linked to several of the areas outlined directly above:

- Institutional direction (see Fig. 2 above, QAF, p. 4)
- Academic excellence and innovation (QAF, p. 8)
- Student experience and careers (QAF, p. 11)
- Community, partnerships and alumni (QAF, p. 14)
- Research relevance (QAF, p. 16)
- Facilities and resources (QAF, p. 18)

Each of these quality assurance maps sets out graphically how the institution implements the “Plan, Do, Check, Act” cycle in that specific area, with details of the inputs, actions and stakeholders involved. This model incorporates the various levels of the institution and allows for the qualitative development of the institution.

The group of experts welcomes the initial steps taken by CRCS and Swiss Education Group (SEG) to put in place quality assurance structures and processes within an overall quality assurance framework, as well as the participative culture that supports CRCS's shared governance model within the institution. CRCS views this model, and the associated committee structure, as having supported stakeholders in developing an understanding of how they can contribute to quality assurance. The group of experts also recognises the importance of the structure in ensuring the involvement of all institutional constituents within the quality assurance and governance systems; however, the group of experts also emphasises the need for accountability for and transparency within the system. From their review of the accreditation application and initial discussions with CRCS, it was not clear to the group of experts where and with whom overall responsibility for quality assurance lies. Ultimately, it was clarified during the on-site visit that overall accountability for quality assurance lies with CRCS's Dean. CRCS must ensure that this is clear to all of the institution's stakeholders – both internal and external.

The group of experts notes with approval the very positive role taken on by SEG in supporting CRCS's journey and were pleased to observe first-hand SEG's commitment to CRCS's further growth. However, the group of experts stresses that CRCS is at a very early juncture on its quality assurance journey. The group of experts are of the opinion that the quality assurance strategy could be better defined and should move beyond simply 'planning', 'checking' and 'doing' into 'acting' and analysing. Furthermore, the group of experts noted during the on-site visit that there is a degree of misalignment between the vision of CRCS and that of SEG with regard to the strategic positioning and future direction of the institution. Discussions involving CRCS and SEG leadership left the group of experts seeking further clarity with regard to the envisaged institutional mandate and positioning: Whilst CRCS leadership sees entrepreneurship and practical education as the preferred path, SEG expressed a desire to strengthen CRCS's reputation as a more “academic” and research-focused institution. The group of experts advises that reflection and agreement upon CRCS's strategic trajectory is required by CRCS and SEG to optimise the direction of the quality assurance system.

Moreover, interviews with stakeholders suggested that CRCS frequently acquiesces to the wishes expressed by its stakeholders. The expert peer group advises the institution that a lack of self-reflection can, in the long run, damage the institutional strategic position and identity. The experts also advise CRCS to ensure that any action taken is prudent, self-reflective and consistent with the institution's mission and values.

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

Recommendation #1: *Align CRCS's and Swiss Education Group's (SEG) visions, missions and strategic plans concerning CRCS to optimise the direction of the quality assurance system.*

Recommendation #2: Strengthen the strategic position and identity of CRCS, and ensure that any action taken is prudent, self-reflective, and consistent with the institution's mission and values.

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.

CRCS's most recent strategic plan was launched in 2021 for the period 2022–2025, following a "bottom-up process involving contributions from different committees" (SAR, p. 17). The Supervisory Committee regularly monitors the effectiveness of the overall quality assurance system by, for example, considering student satisfaction, alumni and staff surveys (SAR, p. 20).

The institution's mission statement is to be "*a leading hospitality school with entrepreneurship and sustainability at its heart*" (Strategic Framework, p. 3) and the institution expressed a desire during the on-site visit to become the no. 2 hospitality school in Switzerland. CRCS has identified four pillars as being central to its mission (entrepreneurship, innovation, sustainability, and leadership), and the Strategic Framework identifies strategic priorities for the period 2022–2025 (Strategic Framework, p. 6). Each strategic priority is linked to the quality assurance system and has associated KPIs and a related committee to review the relevant KPIs. Progress on the achievement of KPIs associated with CRCS's priorities (and pillars) is monitored through CRCS's KPI Dashboard.

Satisfactory examples of changes and enhancements effected on the basis of monitoring were provided by CRCS, including action following the identification of a red flag within the KPI Dashboard and in response to the annual curriculum audit. These resulted in the exploration of new electives within programmes. However, the experts observe a rather short-term approach in CRCS's strategy based on tactics rather than strategies. This is evident in the outcomes of the Strategic Committee's annual monitoring process. Although the current strategic plan was developed in 2021, it was adjusted in summer 2022. It was also unclear how some of the indicators were measured – for example, it was not stipulated how the institution confirmed that "validation of the research agenda", "develop a holistic approach to mental health" or "create a more engaging and interactive newsletter" had been achieved. While the experts praise the responsiveness and adaptability of CRCS, they recommend that the institution be more proactive in anticipating its needs and more precise in carrying out the measures it takes.

CRCS's 'open-door policy' was referenced throughout the on-site visit. The group of experts acknowledges the benefits associated with such a culture and welcomes CRCS's willingness to accommodate and respond to feedback. However, the group of experts urges CRCS to refrain from overly reactive, deficit-orientated responses to informal requests. The group of experts would like to see more proactivity from the institution following reflection and analysis. As far as possible, significant changes should be effected in response to formal processes to ensure consistency in CRCS's actions and to prevent a significant divergence or drift from CRCS's mission and strategy.

Overall, the group of experts observed an institution in which feedback is welcome and gathered through many processes – both formal and informal – to facilitate capturing snapshots in time of how CRCS's provision and other activities align with its strategy and mission and to adjust provision and activities where necessary. As outlined above, an 'open door' policy is in place (Cf. Faculty Handbook, p. 15), and CRCS undergoes external audits and reviews annually. However, as also observed under standard 1.1, the group of experts encourages further critical self-reflection and analysis by CRCS when considering issues highlighted through feedback before determining the appropriate response. This should help to ensure that

provision and operations remain aligned with the institutional strategy, mission, priorities and pillars. A more proactive mindset in taking action is also advised – key to this will be considering how to make CRCS’s strengths stronger, rather than focusing wholly on, and reacting to, areas of weakness and deficit. The group of experts assesses standard 1.2 as being largely fulfilled.

Recommendation #3: *Act proactively and self-reflectively to address gaps, but also to build on the institution’s strengths in the long term.*

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.

Recommendations arising from CRCS’s initial application for accreditation led to the development of a quality assurance framework based upon a shared governance model. The QAF affirms (QAF, p. 3) CRCS’s shared commitment to continuous quality improvement, with the Supervisory Board “through its internal committees, constantly monitor[ing] and consider[ing] evidence on how effectively it is accomplishing the organizational purpose and objectives”. This includes the involvement of staff, faculty, students and CRCS’s external stakeholders.

All faculty members are expected to contribute towards shared decision-making through roles on committees (Faculty Handbook, p. 5), and external perspectives are incorporated within the development and implementation of the quality assurance system through the presence of alumni and representatives of industry and university partners on the Supervisory Committee and the External Advisory Board. The group of experts affirms the importance of this external feedback in ensuring that programmes remain relevant and current and that students are well prepared for the world of work post-graduation. The *SAR Action Plan* details CRCS’s intention to transcribe informal feedback from industry partners to further inform provision. The experts recommend that CRCS progress this plan and the full implementation of all other actions identified within the *SAR Action Plan*.

The group of experts heard during the on-site visit that student participation in the development and implementation of CRCS’s quality assurance system is enabled by collecting their opinions through surveys (for example, course evaluations and student satisfaction surveys), term representatives and committee membership. This includes the Student Ambassador Committee (SAC). The group of experts welcomes the fact that students are provided with an induction prior to commencing their duties on the committee, as well as a contract and a handbook outlining duties, rules and regulations, responsibilities and other important matters. A certificate of participation is provided to each SAC member at the end of term.

The open-door policy in place within CRCS (Faculty Handbook, p. 15) also facilitates the participation of CRCS community members in the quality assurance system. They are aware of its existence and benefits: During the on-site visit, the group of experts heard that even those CRCS community members who are not committee members feel that their voices are heard.

Within the shared governance model, CRCS observes that it “maintains a balance between delegating responsibility for quality assurance to the appropriate [c]ommittees and retaining institutional direction, as well as balance between individual responsibility for achieving high quality educational outcomes...and a degree of standardization and collective responsibility” (SAR, p. 20). Upon this basis, CRCS has developed a relatively complex committee structure that includes a large number of committees, focus groups and special assignment committees.

The group of experts acknowledges the importance of ensuring the involvement of all

institutional constituents within the quality assurance system and the many ways in which CRCS ensures that all stakeholders are enabled to contribute to its development and implementation. However, they are of the opinion that the committee structure, as currently constituted, is disproportionate in size and complexity for the small, family-like institution that CRCS is. The group of experts is not convinced that, in its current form, the committee structure provides the optimum way for the institution's internal and external stakeholders to contribute to governance and quality assurance. Simplification and systematisation of the system and associated processes are required to facilitate improved implementation and impact. This is acknowledged by CRCS, who, during the on-site visit, stated that, as a priority, the quality assurance system and its committees should be given more structure. The group of experts has recommended a condition of accreditation on this subject under standard 2.1.

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 analyse the relevance of its quality assurance system and make the necessary adjustments.

CRCS engages in a variety of types of data collection and analysis to determine the relevance of its quality assurance system and the outcomes of these analyses are used to enhance provision and practice in CRCS. These include the conduct of internal evaluations and reviews, the collection of internal feedback through staff and faculty meetings, surveys, and the conduct of faculty peer-to-peer evaluations (SAR, pp. 77 et seqq.).

What could not always be observed was (i) consistent 'closing of the loop' in terms of systematically analysing the effectiveness and impact of any adjustments made on the basis of the outcomes and (ii) a strategic and measured response to the outcomes of analysis (versus a deficit-orientated reaction, often on the basis of informal feedback). Within its own *SAR Action Plan* (SAR, pp. 79–83), CRCS acknowledges that it has not yet analysed its quality assurance performance systematically; an audit of this area is planned in the next two years.

A quality assurance survey of staff was conducted in 2022 to explore the extent to which faculty feel included within CRCS's quality assurance system (SAR, p. 24). External reviews take the form of benchmarking of programmes and students' achievement of learning outcomes, which is conducted every five years, formal feedback from WSU and UoD, and external accreditations by THE-ICE, Valais Higher Education Department and EduQua (see section 2 of this report and SAR, p. 23). CRCS regularly implements recommendations stemming from external reviews and audit reports. Members of the External Advisory Board advise CRCS on enhancements, and CRCS provided examples of the implementation of such advice (SAR, p. 24).

It was noted during the on-site visit that student and alumni feedback plays a key role in informing the way in which CRCS enhances the quality of programmes and courses. Information is received from alumni on the roles and industries in which they are working and the value of what they learned during their time at CRCS, which informs further curriculum development. Student feedback informs enhancements to the curriculum and procedures within the CRCS community (for example, strengthening sustainability within the curriculum or revising the CRCS dress code to ensure gender neutrality). It is clear that CRCS's openness and responsiveness to their suggestions and requests is appreciated by students.

As noted elsewhere, however, communication tends to be on a rather informal basis; amendments within curricula to ensure coherence across disciplines within the bachelor's and master's programmes are also noted to occur on the basis of informal exchange between faculty members (SAR, p. 81). However, within the *SAR Action Plan* (SAR, pp. 79–83), CRCS

acknowledges the requirement for a more formal structure in this area. The experts note the same need and recommend that CRCS adjust and fully implement the *SAR Action Plan*.

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

Recommendation #4: *Ensure that CRCS's Self-assessment Report Action Plan is adjusted and fully implemented.*

Area 2: Governance

Standard 2.1: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the organisational 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.

CRCS refers to the governance structure set out in the document *Shared Governance at CRCS* as “[t]he cornerstone of [CRCS’s] Quality Assurance Framework” (SAR, p. 25).

“Shared Governance in CRCS” outlines how CRCS’s Supervisory Committee delegates governance responsibilities to the Academic Board and the Operations Board. Both boards have established sub-committees for specific purposes. A special assignment committee may be convened for a fixed period by the Supervisory Committee as a sub-committee (of the Supervisory Committee) to address specific challenges or charges.

The External Advisory Board provides a link between CRCS and industry and contributes to CRCS’s development journey (*Shared Governance in CRCS*, p. 8).

Governance Structure and Reporting Lines

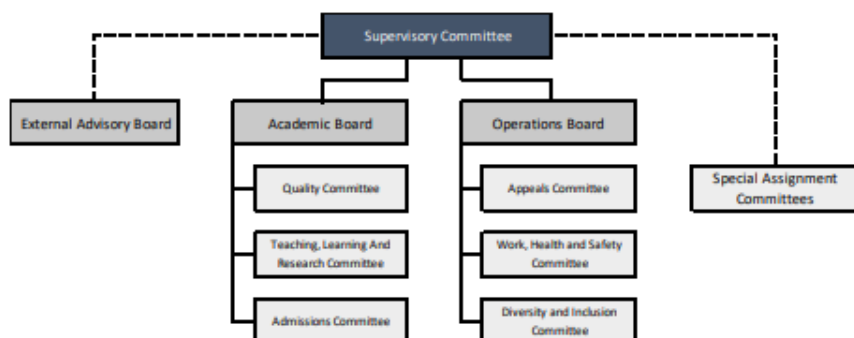


Fig. 3: A graphic representation of CRCS’s governance committee structure (*Shared Governance in CRCS*, p. 4)

CRCS facilitates the incorporation of stakeholder voices within institutional governance, but due to its complexity, there can be overlap and confusion between the remits and responsibilities of the individual committees. The workload associated with committee service is considerable for CRCS’s leadership, faculty and staff, with many taking on roles within several committees. CRCS lacks a clear framework for decision-making and must consider how it can structure its committee system more systematically to enable this. In doing so, it must make clear who is responsible for what, and how decision-making processes interact with each other. Central to these considerations is how CRCS ensures that any new structure supports the institution in achieving its strategic objectives.

Furthermore, the group of experts agrees that it is unclear how the constituent elements of the quality assurance system fit together and how, as currently implemented, the framework

supports the institution in ensuring that the quality loop is closed. For example, CRCS notes that a culture of quality is present in the institution thanks to an open-door policy, operating bottom-up and highlighted by CRCS (Faculty Handbook, p. 15). This shows CRCS's willingness to take into account the opinions of its various stakeholders and to respond to them. However, this process does not follow any pre-defined decision-making structure: some actions are taken following the suggestions of stakeholders, but feedback is not systematic.

In view of the progress made by CRCS in recent years in implementing a quality assurance system, the group of experts is of the view that there is potential to bring real structure and strategic management to CRCS's quality assurance system, but emphasises that this will take time. The group of experts recommends that CRCS further systematise and formalise its processes for collecting, analysing and implementing feedback. This will allow the institution to ensure that the entire 'plan, do, check, act' (PDCA) cycle is implemented more systematically in all areas of its operations and activities.

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

Condition #1: *CRCS simplifies and reorganises the quality assurance system and associated processes, ensuring their systematisation and formalisation, to improve their anchoring, implementation and communication and to guarantee robust decision-making processes.*

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.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative data are collected to perform quality audits, monitor the quality of academic provision, identify potential risk or areas for improvement and monitor the impact of any actions taken (SAR, p. 31).

Qualitative data encompass *inter alia* feedback arising from committees, focus groups and other meetings and surveys. The SAR notes that qualitative data provide richer information that can more readily (than quantitative data) inform decision-making for quality enhancement purposes. Quantitative data are gathered from *inter alia* course evaluations, student satisfaction surveys and staff satisfaction surveys (SAR, p. 31).

The group of experts had sight of a variety of surveys and their results, and note that opinions and feedback are elicited from a wide variety of CRCS's stakeholders through this vehicle. Suggestions raised through surveys are considered and may be actioned – the recent update to CRCS's dress code to incorporate considerations with regard to gender neutrality is an example of qualitative feedback from students giving rise to an enhancement in policy and practice within the institution. In its *SAR Action Plan* (SAR, pp. 79–83), CRCS acknowledges the absence of a formal tracking process for informal qualitative data collected from industry partners. The group of experts encourages CRCS to implement this plan to inform decision-making. In this sense, they reiterate recommendation #4.

The majority of the data – qualitative and quantitative – are collected directly from the school administrative system (SWIS) or by means of surveys. These data are used to establish statistics for reporting to committees primarily through the KPI dashboard, which the SAR states is accessible by all representative groups (SAR, p. 31). CRCS confirmed in an interview that KPIs are defined by the Supervisory Committee and that CRCS's Dean reports on the achievement of KPIs to the Supervisory Committee at regular intervals.

CRCS's KPI dashboard presents a multitude of rather granular data. The dashboard itself

contains 17 spreadsheets that, alongside the main CRCS KPI overview, cover areas such as Academic Excellence, Student Experience and Careers, and Curriculum Audit. There is room for improvement in CRCS's formulation and management of its KPIs, and CRCS should reconsider how it frames indicators and how it analyses whether these indicators have been met. As currently framed, many of the indicators are 'weakness-orientated'. They are reactive rather than responsive or proactive. In framing its KPIs, in addition to considering how it can rectify any deficits, CRCS should consider how it can build on its strengths to bolster and further develop these.

The monitoring of actions taken to meet the KPIs was also raised during the on-site visit. CRCS noted that there are "main goals" within the dashboard that are "monitored, but not to be micro-managed". The Supervisory Committee receives reports on selected KPIs, rather than the KPIs in their entirety. Nevertheless, it was challenging to discern how CRCS manages oversight of KPIs and their achievement without becoming overwhelmed by details.

The group of experts also considered how CRCS analyses actions taken in response to KPIs. During the preliminary and on-site visits, a small number of concrete examples of how KPIs are monitored and recalibrated was provided to the peers. Examples pertaining to enrolment and sustainability were discussed during the on-site visit. However, while concrete examples of actions taken on the basis of this activity were provided, the expert peer group observed that institutional stakeholders referred to those same examples repeatedly throughout the on-site visit and that there was little further evidence of concrete actions, the closing of loops or impact measurement.

Therefore, although the group of experts notes and welcomes the many sources of quantitative and qualitative information drawn upon by CRCS for its decision-making processes and the range of topics and goals with associated KPIs, they recommend that CRCS ensure that it employs critical reflection when analysing these data and that the college reconsider how it frames KPIs. The experts acknowledge the range of areas considered by CRCS within its KPI dashboard and further acknowledge the examples provided by CRCS of how it formulates, evaluates and tracks the achievement of KPIs. However, CRCS should ensure that its KPIs represent areas in which it demonstrates strategic advantage as well as those in which it recognises deficits. CRCS might also consider whether it can consolidate KPIs so that all relevant stakeholders are able to maintain an overview of them easily.

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

Recommendation #5: *Engage in regular critical reflection to optimise the use of the data collected and to make the best use of it for the institution.*

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.

Reflecting the shared governance model in place within CRCS, the QAF notes that "[i]t is the responsibility of all stakeholders of [CRCS] to ensure the implementation of quality assurance into their practice and improve through a systematic and periodic process". CRCS aims to ensure collaborative, inclusive and transparent participation by stakeholders within its strategic planning process, with opportunities for deep listening and inclusive engagement. In addition to engagement through committees and focus groups, interactive workshops, interviews, surveys and other outreach methods were mentioned as ways in which stakeholders were encouraged to participate in planning for the current strategy (SAR, pp. 33-34).

Internal and external stakeholders feed into institutional governance in a variety of ways; for example, faculty members contribute to developing and updating the institutional SWOT analysis, strategic planning and the QAF. Student participation is incorporated within the governance system through student representatives and members of the SAC, who meet with CRCS management twice per term to provide feedback on academic matters, projects and concerns (SAR, p. 34).

External participation in CRCS's governance system is provided by the involvement of external stakeholders in the External Advisory Board, which meets twice per year and advises CRCS on the development of additional programmes and professional development, among other things. WSU and UoD provide guidance and support to the institution. The SAR also references the contributions of alumni and industry partners (SAR, p. 34).

In an interview, CRCS confirmed their desire to strengthen engagement and participation by alumni in CRCS's provision and activities. CRCS also sees potential for marketing shorter programmes of education and training to alumni and their contacts, given trends within education towards micro-credentials and shorter, bite-sized courses to upskill and reskill.

Alumni can make significant contributions to CRCS's provision in representing accessible links to industry and contributing feedback on CRCS's curricula and strategy; however, the group of experts initially queried how increased participation by alumni in CRCS's activities would strengthen quality. CRCS referred the group of experts to the value of alumni feedback that it had gathered on the curriculum: for example, in some cases alumni were able to point to specific learning from their degrees that they only began to realise the use of within the workplace.

When meeting with various stakeholder groups during the on-site visit, the group of experts had the opportunity to discuss perceptions of how the quality assurance system and shared governance model facilitated the voices of those groups to be heard. During the meeting with students, for example, the group of experts was told that student members of committees are provided with information prior to joining committees, but are not provided with specific training for all committees. Students interviewed felt comfortable and well prepared for their roles; however, the group of experts is of the opinion that training would be beneficial to student members of governance units to empower them and facilitate their full engagement, as well as enabling them to develop transferable skills. CRCS might consider developing such training for student representatives involved in CRCS governance committees.

In this session, as in others during the on-site visit, the group of experts received the impression that the participants had been briefed to provide acceptable answers. This stifled discussion during on-site visit sessions and gave rise to an impression of a dearth of transparency and a lack of independence on the part of internal stakeholders. The group of experts emphasises strongly the value of, and need for, independence of institutional stakeholders in their contribution to, and participation in, the institutional quality assurance system and have made a recommendation in this regard.

As highlighted elsewhere in this report, the group of experts notes the open-door policy in place in CRCS (Cf. Faculty Handbook, p. 15). The institutional culture is to encourage informal feedback from faculty, staff and students to the relevant member of management or faculty. This is commendable, and it facilitates the contributions of constituents who are not involved in CRCS's committees. It is also clearly welcomed by faculty, staff and students. However, an over-reliance on ad hoc, informal communication runs the risk of inconsistency of action and response by CRCS. This, combined with CRCS's apparent tendency to respond reactively and positively to requests for changes to curricula and practice within the institution, risks CRCS deviating from its strategic plan – in particular, its plan to progress its research orientation. The group of experts welcomes the willingness of CRCS's management and staff to listen to institutional constituents and take on board their feedback, but cautions the institution that it

must take a more strategic and systematic approach to the feedback of its internal stakeholders.

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

Recommendation #6: *Develop a participation charter to reinforce the guarantee of independence and the right of participation of the various stakeholders.*

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.

The institution has developed a Sustainability Management Plan (SMP), which “provides concrete direction toward environmental sustainability within the college and guides decision making, management and the daily operations of the institution in a sustainable manner” (SAR, p. 36). The SMP refers to five KPIs with regard to sustainability, but does not explicitly reference these five KPIs. The document also sets out an overview of CRCS’s objectives with regard to health and safety on campus, sustainable management of landscapes on campus and the Green Globe indicators, which are categorised under “sustainable management”, “social and economic indicators”, “cultural heritage” and “environmental factors” (SMP, pp. 9-11).

Three priorities and drivers are aligned to each KPI and each indicator is assigned a person responsible. To measure whether the KPI is on track or not, the ‘plan, do, check, act’ cycle is applied; if the KPI is off-track, the plan is adjusted and recalibrated as required. The sustainability committee meets at least twice per term to review and measure all KPIs associated with sustainability. All of those responsible for projects provide updates. A report is published on progress twice per year.

Whilst the SAR references various types of sustainability incorporated within this plan, including environmental and sociocultural sustainability, the SMP itself focuses primarily on environmental sustainability – for example, the aim of the Sustainable Committee focuses on “engaging in practices that have a direct impact on our environment and indirectly through the education of our students” (Sustainability Management Plan, p. 5). Furthermore, the objectives outlined in the SMP refer to reducing CRCS’s carbon footprint through the engagement of students, the school and staff members (ibid.).

CRCS attained “Green Globe” certification for its Bouveret campus in 2021 (SAR, p. 38). This badge recognises “[sustainable operation and management of travel and tourism](https://www.greenglobe.com/)”.³ A sustainability self-assessment was conducted in November 2022, which led to a plan of actions, one of which is an initiative to reduce food waste. CRCS detailed a project in place to meet this objective.

CRCS’s work and initiative in achieving certification for the Bouveret campus is to be commended, but institutional accreditation is holistic and incorporates all provision by CRCS across both of its campuses. CRCS intends to apply the learnings from Green Globe certification of the Bouveret campus to help acquire certification for the Brig campus. This is welcomed, and CRCS is encouraged to ensure that certification and sustainable management and practice is implemented in both locations.

The SAR notes that social sustainability is embedded within the SMP; however, this is not immediately evident from a review of that document. Several actions are listed under the heading of social sustainability, including *inter alia* the promotion and recruitment of local staff,

³ <https://www.greenglobe.com/>

recruitment of “people in need”, corporate philanthropy and community development. The SAR also references scholarships and payment plans that CRCS provides for students in financial difficulties and confirms that CRCS has recently increased funding for financial scholarships (SAR, p. 40). The group of experts referred to the substantial annual fees paid by CRCS students in the context of social sustainability and heard that CRCS has students from all social backgrounds and does not differentiate between students. It was also noted in the meeting that CRCS envisages that accreditation would support a more diverse selection of students to attend the institution, given that certain countries require that a school be federally accredited in order to be listed for their scholarship programmes.

With regard to economic sustainability, the SAR states that CRCS “has been operating in a financially sustainable manner over the past 40 years despite a variety of geopolitical and health crises” and confirms that CRCS relies on “a performant reliant student recruitment process to ensure it generates the revenues necessary to support the development and delivery of [its] services and practices”. The SAR references financial support from SEG “[s]hould a financial challenge occur” and notes that “[s]o far, having two schools combined in one legal entity has helped to offset the temporarily lower results of one school with the other” (SAR, p. 66).

Events over the past three years have contributed to CRCS’s inability to achieve its forecast level of growth over the past two years: enrolment decreased by 43% in 2021, and by 8% in 2022 (compared with 2020). This has had a significant impact on CRCS’s financial health, and CRCS’s financial documents (submitted alongside the SAR) show a significant deficit for 2022 and forecast a further significant deficit for 2023 (5.91, 2018–2022 *Summary Finance*). Financial assistance from SEG and the availability of a surplus on the part of CAAS have supported CRCS in this challenging time, but this is not a sustainable situation. CRCS must consider what steps it can take to meet its recruitment targets as well as other ways in which it can ensure its economic sustainability independent of support from SEG or from CAAS.

CRCS references in the SAR the incorporation of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within its programmes (and states that these are covered in approximately 15% of course time over the first two terms of the bachelor’s programme). Further work is planned to analyse all courses, to provide additional staff training on the SDGs and to implement the Sustainability Commitment, currently embedded in terms 1 and 2 of the bachelor’s programme, within all syllabi (SAR, p. 38). The work undertaken by CRCS is welcome, as are CRCS’s plans with regard to further incorporating the SDGs within its provision; however, the SDGs extend beyond environmental sustainability to include goals such as the promotion of gender equality, peace, justice and strong institutions (see [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development](https://sdgs.un.org/goals)⁴). During the on-site visit, and within the application documentation, there was little evidence that CRCS and its constituents had considered the SDGs that extend beyond environmental sustainability and responsible consumption. The experts call for CRCS to broaden its interpretation of the SDGs and to take a holistic approach towards incorporating a wider range of considerations and activity within its curricula and wider activity in a systematic, transparent and formalised way. The expert group also emphasises the global nature of standard 2.4 and asks CRCS to apply the same objectives and measures on both of its campuses; at present, there is inconsistency in this area. In the opinion of the expert group, CRCS cannot meet the sustainability standard if action is not taken throughout the whole institution. The expert peer group has recommended a condition of accreditation in this regard under this standard.

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

Condition #2: CRCS defines an action plan derived from its institutional strategy to ensure social, economic and ecological sustainability and ensures its implementation and monitoring on both campuses.

⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

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.

Equal opportunity is primarily understood by CRCS as the valuing of a diversity of nationalities and cultures within its institution. Within the SAR, when discussing equality, diversity and inclusion, CRCS often refers to the student and staff community on campus. In 2022, 19 nationalities were represented among CRCS's faculty and staff. 40 nationalities are noted to have been represented within the student body in 2022. The group of experts witnessed this diversity during both the preliminary and on-site visits on the Bouveret campus. They also noted that CRCS's work to support diversity across a number of areas is supported by the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, which comprises representatives from across the institutional community. However, this approach to equal opportunity remains far from complete. The group of experts urges CRCS to move beyond the current understanding of equal opportunities as referring primarily to ethnicity towards a holistic and comprehensive definition that incorporates all forms of diversity, for example, disability, neurodivergence, as well as prevention of harassment and discrimination.

Although students with learning challenges and disabilities are welcome at CRCS, and the supports provided for individual learners are detailed within the report (SAR, p. 40), the peers were surprised to note the inclusion of details of two specific students with disabilities in the SAR. They advise CRCS to avoid, in future, providing in a public document personal details of students who will be easily identified by others. The examples outlined in the SAR indicate that CRCS's current position in this area is to facilitate participation by disabled students on an *ad hoc* basis rather than having a clear and transparent policy in this regard.

During the interviews, CRCS representatives referred to some specific examples where students had been bullied, but stressed that there is no general problem within the institution. The group of experts notes that CRCS's assessment that there are "no issues" with diversity and inclusion within CRCS suggests that the detection process may not be as effective as it could be. The group of experts was told that speaking about bullying and harassment is still taboo for some students on campus, which underlines the need for a policy to actively promote and encourage diversity and inclusion and to discourage discrimination. This is not currently evident within the "Educate, Communicate, Celebrate Strategy" recently drafted (January 2023) and aimed at supporting equality, diversity and inclusion within the institution.

As to gender equality, CRCS confirms that it has regard to gender balance and notes that 56% of the student body and 59% of faculty and staff are women. In the academic department, 74% of members are women, while the proportion of women in the operations department is 45% (SAR, p. 39). Women are also represented on many of CRCS's committees (for example, [the External Advisory Board comprises five men and three women](#)⁵); this cannot be said of the Supervisory Committee, [which comprises five men, including SEG's Chief Executive Officer, its Vice President and its Finance Director](#).⁶ This was acknowledged by CRCS in the SAR (SAR, p. 41) and during the on-site visit, and plans to select an additional member (ideally a woman and not a westerner) to join the Supervisory Committee were shared.

Furthermore, the SAR refers to the stipulation within the Employment Regulations contract that, in accordance with the Swiss Gender Equality Act in Art. 8 of the Federal Constitution, members of the college community must not be discriminated against on grounds of their gender, marital status, family situation, or pregnancy. The group of experts notes that this is a legal requirement

⁵ <https://www.cesarritzcolleges.edu/en/hotel-management-programs/quality-assurance/>

⁶ *Idem*.

in Switzerland and that CRCS's current position confuses mere non-discrimination with the active promotion of gender equality. In their opinion, significant work is required on CRCS's part to incorporate concrete gender equality considerations and strategic plans. This need is also identified by the CRCS community. The SAR notes (p. 30) that 65% of staff were not satisfied with diversity and inclusion on campus. Qualitative data within the survey indicate that staff see a need for the institution to communicate more openly and transparently in order to ensure that diversity and inclusion are better supported on campus. CRCS expressed surprise at the outcome and noted that the findings of the survey were a learning opportunity. In response, CRCS developed the "Educate, Communicate, Celebrate" strategy (January 2023; also referenced above). During the on-site visit, CRCS cited several examples of activities undertaken to support equality on campus, such as introducing inclusive, non-discriminatory language within the institution. These initiatives, as well as the plans to continue this work, are welcome. However, as elsewhere, the group of experts would have wished to see a greater level of critical self-reflection and more open and transparent provision of feedback by all stakeholders to demonstrate that CRCS has considered current and future challenges.

A reading of the "Educate, Communicate, Celebrate" strategy shows that the institution is still in its infancy when it comes to equality. It sets out as an action for 2023 the development of an inclusion and diversity strategy and an action plan for all sections of the strategy. The group of experts notes that the strategy and action plan as currently framed are rather high-level and very sparse in terms of content. No meaningful objectives or targets could be discerned within either document, and the strategy and action plan are not mentioned within the strategy for 2022-2025. A significant amount of work is required to develop the strategy and action plan into meaningful guidance and direction for the incorporation of considerations on equal opportunities and gender equality within CRCS's provision and operations. CRCS must establish a cohesive and systematic action plan with meaningful objectives to further embed equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of CRCS's provision and operations. A condition of accreditation in this regard is recommended.

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

Condition #3: CRCS establishes an action plan for the promotion of equal opportunity and gender equality derived from its institutional strategy and ensures its implementation and monitoring on 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.

Teaching

CRCS provides both a bachelor's and a master's programme. The programmes are provided in partnership with overseas universities (Washington State University [WSU] and University of Derby [UoD], respectively) and incorporate both on-campus learning and industry placement (SAR, p. 43).

In both cases, students are registered in both CRCS and the relevant partner institution for both bachelor's or both master's programmes. If bachelor's degree students meet the minimum requirements of WSU, they will be awarded a bachelor's degree from WSU alongside the CRCS degree; if they do not, they are awarded the CRCS degree only. Completion of the CRCS master's programme entitles students to be awarded the UoD MA. The details of both programmes, including details of the constituent modules, are included within the CRCS

Academic Program Guide; however, this document does not clearly detail the relationship between CRCS's programmes and those of its partner institutions. This should be clarified.

Another entity also influences the teaching life of CRCS. The Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland (CAAS) originated as a programme of CRCS, but has since developed into a separate department. However, it continues to share its legal identity with CRCS. The two entities are also inextricably linked in terms of operations, personnel and finances. This dependence between the two parties is a significant obstacle to accreditation. CAAS awards degrees (Bachelor of Arts in Culinary Arts and Master of Arts in Culinary Business Management) in a professional discipline. However, such degrees for professional programmes do not comply with Article 12 of the Ordinance coordinating the education of accredited HEIs. The expert group points out that the request for institutional accreditation of CRCS concerns only the accreditation of CRCS and not that of CAAS. It further notes that institutional accreditation cannot be granted to CRCS as things stand. Either CAAS must be considered part of CRCS and should rename its degrees to correspond to those titles that are recognised by the law, or a complete legal separation of the two entities must be carried out. During the visit, the experts were told that CRCS has discussed plans to establish CAAS as a separate legal entity with the Canton of Valais and that the Canton is in favour of this plan; CRCS noted that this will be a "simple process", which is also supported by SEG. CRCS stressed that, when discussing strategy and related matters, CAAS is kept completely separate from CRCS. However, given the extent to which the operations and activities of both schools are intertwined, the experts are of the opinion that separation will likely be a complicated process – for example, 75% of the Program Manager's time is allocated to CRCS, while 25% is allocated to CAAS; 72% of the Associate Professors' time is spent on CRCS, while 28% is allocated to work with CAAS (*iv. Clear allocation of any other shared resources between CAAS and CRCS*). The experts therefore advise CRCS not to underestimate the burden that a separation may represent.

CRCS offers some continuing education programmes to its faculty, staff and students through third-party platforms. The institution does not currently offer continuing education that it itself has developed and delivers (SAR, p. 44). CRCS might consider whether the internal development of continuing education programmes for members of the institutional community and for the wider community in Bouveret and Brig is a potential pathway for further development.

To support students in their learning, a tutoring scheme is made available to students. The tutoring itself is provided by fellow students who have previously taken the relevant course and achieved a high grade. Contact is established between the tutor and the tutee through the SEG app; meetings between the pairs generally take place once or twice a week, and certification is provided (SAR, p. 45). The group of experts heard during the on-site visit that training is not provided to the tutors. At a minimum, training on observing the principles of academic integrity should be provided to student tutors. In an interview, CRCS also made reference to a proofreading service for students who are non-native speakers, which is provided by faculty and staff. The provision of learning support by CRCS's faculty and staff to students is welcome, but the group of experts advises that clear guidelines should be developed on the provision of such a proofreading service to ensure that it is provided in line with the requirements of academic integrity.

Academic freedom and independence

The subject of academic freedom and independence was discussed with various stakeholder groups during the on-site visit. CRCS notes that academic freedom and independence "play a crucial role in shaping CRCS's mission and strategies", and observes that "clear lines of roles and responsibilities are set through a Service Level Agreement between CRCS and...SEG providing CRCS with Shared Services and legal advising". As detailed above, SEG is also called upon to provide financial assistance if CRCS finds itself in deficit, which occurred in 2022 and is expected to occur again in the near future (*2018–022 Summary Finance*).

CRCS confirmed during the on-site visit that all teaching and research activity is completely within the remit of CRCS, with all decisions related to research taken by the Research Committee, entirely independently of SEG. It further confirmed that CRCS is completely independent of SEG when it comes to research matters, and that SEG's involvement in CRCS does not extend to research matters. All faculty are paid by CRCS – here, the group of experts notes that, as outlined above, where deficits in CRCS's budget occur, SEG may act (and has acted) as a “temporary sponsor”. The group of experts recommends that CRCS ensure that all documentation detailing the relationship between SEG and CRCS confirm the independence and autonomy of CRCS in its activities, including activity associated with teaching and research. They make a recommendation to this effect. The current relationship between CRCS and CAAS also has the potential to impact on the independence of CRCS's provision. This matter is discussed under Standard 2.1, where a condition of accreditation is also recommended.

Research

Research is a relatively new – and therefore not very developed – endeavour within CRCS, who see the establishment and development of the research department as an important strand of CRCS's strategic development. The college's Research Mission Statement affirms CRCS's focus on research that promotes entrepreneurship, sustainability, leadership, inclusivity and visionary thinking among business leaders and scholars (Research Program Document, p. 5).

Both a research committee and a research ethics committee have been established, and since 2022 six associate professors (including the Head of Research) have been in place on the Brig Campus. They are charged with driving CRCS's research activity forward under the leadership of the Head of Research. Associate professors are engaged at between 20% and 40% full-time equivalent (FTE) (SAR, p. 46). This is protected within the relevant contracts. The group of experts notes that 20% (the lower bar) is rather a limited amount of time to allow for the conduct of serious research activity and encourages CRCS to consider extending the protected time allowed to associate professors for research.

From 2021 to July 2022, publications have grown from two to eight (of these, five are peer-reviewed publications [*Ibid.*], which is a modest result). The group of experts notes that, while reference is made on [CRCS's website](https://www.cesarritzcolleges.edu/en/research/)⁷ to CRCS's research lines and to a number of published research papers, there are no links provided, and some of the publications predate the authors' commencement of employment with CRCS.

Research is mapped to and informs teaching and services: continuity of teaching, research and academic service is identified as a guiding principle of the institution (SAR, p. 48) and the integration of research practices into teaching is a service goal within the Research Program (Research Program, p. 17). A further service goal refers to increasing faculty-led and student-led publications within CRCS. This is one of a number of references to student-led research across CRCS's documentation (Cf. SAR, pp. 46, 48). The incorporation of research within teaching and learning at an early stage of studies is to be commended, as are the awards that CRCS makes to students to encourage their engagement in research during their studies. However, the group of experts emphasises that student contributions to research – widely highlighted in the documents provided by CRCS and during the visits – cannot be counted when evaluating CRCS's contribution to research or its research output.

The group of experts notes the investment that CRCS has made towards developing a research culture within the institution; however, they observe that further investment in resources for research is absolutely essential. This includes the safeguarding of a minimum reasonable proportion of associate professors' time for research. Moreover, all members of the CRCS community should have access to the resources and facilities necessary to conduct research. Access to advanced research libraries is currently provided by WSU and UoD (SAR, p. 47). Master's students have access to UoD databases, and lecturers are provided with the status of

⁷ <https://www.cesarritzcolleges.edu/en/research/>

“accredited lecturer” through UoD, which facilitates access to databases, e-books, academic journals and the like. CRCS confirmed during the on-site visit that undergraduate students access databases by sharing passwords with master’s students. The group of experts recommends that CRCS ensure that all faculty members and students have access to academic databases, either provided directly by CRCS or SEG or through a written agreement between CRCS and its partner universities. Access to such databases should not be dependent upon shared passwords.

Having commenced its research strategy in earnest during 2021, the group of experts notes that CRCS’s research activity is as yet at a very early stage and lacks maturity. Significant efforts must be made by CRCS to develop its research. This can contribute significant benefits to the institution, its provision and its students. In order to support and develop existing activity and to accelerate development, CRCS should define a clear plan of action to provide appropriate conditions for research and to make sure that it is nurtured and continues to develop. For example, the experts suggest that CRCS should establish a clear and sufficient budget line for research in the field. The institution could also increase the amount of protected research time for each faculty member involved in research and include this percentage within job descriptions. Each faculty member involved in research should be able to produce and make available to the scientific community (through open access) research results on a theme consistent with one of the three research areas proposed by the school. This does not necessarily have to be individual work; it can be collaborative, but it is a question of showing that all faculty members who have research specified within their job description are in a position to carry out research. According to [DORA](#)⁸, research results can be presented *inter alia* in the form of peer-reviewed articles in a scientific journal (if possible, international), data sets or software. According to the experts, the current CRCS proposal to set a specific number of publications that must be achieved by each researcher is not a beneficial solution for the development of institutional research, as it may force researchers to focus on the quantity of publications at the expense of their quality. Each faculty member involved in research should also be able to participate in colloquia or conferences, thus enabling him or her to learn about research and build a solid network. Finally, CRCS must find a way for each researcher to have access to databases and scientific literature relevant to the research field. In order to maximise the development of its research, CRCS could consider collaborating with a business research laboratory. To help develop the maturity of CRCS’s research approach and output, the group of experts has recommended a condition of accreditation below, reminding CRCS that the achievement and maintenance of institutional accreditation depends upon meeting this condition.

Services

CRCS engages in a variety of activities falling under the heading of ‘service’. These include facilitating internships, career coaching and industry engagement for CRCS’s students. Short courses and MOOCs are also referenced; as outlined above, these are electronic credentials delivered by external providers.

The college has several collaborations with charities, including Make-A-Wish and Terre des Hommes. Letters of intent have been signed by these organisations and by CRCS. Events are organised by students to raise money for these charity partners (SAR, p. 48).

The Faculty Handbook (p. 5) outlines the institution’s reliance upon faculty members to serve the college by participating in shared decision-making and the job descriptions note that all members of faculty must participate in the quality assurance system through membership of institutional committees (5.82 *Job Descriptions Faculty*). The group of experts notes that committee membership poses a heavy workload for faculty members and that the consolidation of CRCS’s committees would be beneficial.

⁸ <https://sfedora.org/read/>.

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

Condition #4: CRCS renames the degrees awarded by CAAS in accordance with the legal requirements in Switzerland, or carries out the complete separation of CRCS and Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland (CAAS) to ensure that the institutions are totally independent at all levels (legal, administrative, financial, etc.).

Condition #5: CRCS establishes a clear plan of action to provide appropriate conditions for research and to ensure that research is nurtured and continues to develop (e.g. CRCS could increase the amount of protected time dedicated to research and insert this percentage into the job description, establish a clear budget line for the necessary funds dedicated to research or ensure that all of those involved in research publish, participate in colloquia or conferences and present peer-reviewed results). CRCS also creates an enabling environment that ensures researchers have access to the necessary resources (i.e. relevant databases, funding for conference participation, etc.).

Recommendation #7: *Ensure that all documentation detailing the relationship between Swiss Education Group (SEG) and CRCS confirms the independence and autonomy of CRCS in its activities, including activity associated with teaching and research.*

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.

Both internal and external evaluations of CRCS's teaching, research and services are conducted – examples of external evaluations are included in Section 2 above.

CRCS has identified purposes for internal evaluation (SAR, p. 53), including contributing to the enhancement of programmes, contributing to the maintenance of quality and standards and evaluating the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements.

A systematic assessment calendar has been put in place to evaluate student experience in terms of successful outcomes, to enable continuous improvement, and to identify risks in relation to academic standards (SAR, p. 52). Continuous monitoring of programmes is conducted by the Quality Committee, which draws upon data emanating from student feedback, student performance, as well as feedback from external examiners and employers.

Students contribute to internal evaluations – for example, by delivering feedback through course evaluations, term representative meetings (twice per term) and student surveys. Students also contribute to Program Committee Meetings.

CRCS confirmed during the on-site visit that overarching outcomes from surveys are shared through faculty meetings and that individual results are shared with the relevant faculty member directly. If a specific objective is not achieved through enhancements to curricula, there is a group discussion to explore what might be done differently. Enhancements to course curricula are also effected on the basis of course evaluation outcomes.

CRCS's responses to feedback through the student satisfaction surveys are collated and shared with students. This communication to students of actions taken and planned on the basis of their feedback is welcome, but CRCS might take care to frame actions identified in a more definite way to ensure clarity, transparency and accountability: for example, actions within the most recent document include "feedback from exams and assignments to be more detailed" and "teaching materials to be updated more regularly".

The institution states that the PDCA cycle is applied to its programme assessment procedures.

An external curriculum audit is conducted annually with input from the External Advisory Board and alumni to facilitate feedback from industry partners with regard to the relevance of CRCS's programmes. Following discussion at Academic Board, revisions are made in response to the findings. It was not clear to the group of experts from the documentation provided in respect of the audit whether enhancements had been made in response to the audit findings, but CRCS noted that consideration was given to the introduction of electives on the basis of audit findings. The group of experts advises that full implementation of the PDCA cycle must be carried out and evidenced; this includes more thorough and transparent communication of actions taken on the basis of both internal and external evaluations.

Faculty are appraised annually (Faculty Handbook, pp. 7-10) and the Faculty Handbook sets out expectations for faculty members with regard to teaching, research and service. CRCS clarified during the on-site visit that the Faculty Handbook has the status of a regulation and that its provisions are binding for faculty members. This should be communicated clearly within the handbook.

Peer-to-peer evaluations of the teaching of all faculty members are mandatory and occur once per year. These are formal, recorded observations of teaching with the aim of identifying, sharing and developing best practice among colleagues. The evaluations produced are reviewed by the Teaching, Learning and Research Committee, and actions are taken when necessary (SAR, p. 70).

With regard to services, internships are evaluated through visits by CRCS's career coaches to training providers in order to evaluate the relevance of the training programme and students' working conditions. The relevance of student-led applied projects with industry partners is regularly audited through focus groups with students (SAR, p. 56). The results of a survey on services were provided to the group of experts; however, it is not clear what follow-up actions were taken by CRCS in response to the findings.

The evaluation system within CRCS is quite comprehensive, comprising both internal and external reviews of various types. It is well implemented and incorporates teaching, research and service. However, although some examples of actions taken on the basis of monitoring and evaluation were provided to the group of experts, it was not always clear that the PDCA cycle was completed and the loop closed. The group of experts has made a recommendation in this regard.

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

Recommendation #8: *Ensure that the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) cycle is completed for all evaluations that CRCS conducts regarding its teaching, research and services, and that each stage of the cycle is documented.*

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

CRCS has taken measures to align its provision with European standards. Its programmes are structured to comply with the Swiss National Qualifications Framework and Bologna requirements. ECTS credits are allocated to programmes and courses and, for the dual degree programmes provided in partnership with UoD and WSU, a mapping of the US and UK credits to ECTS credits is provided (SAR, p. 57).

Specific learning outcomes, which are aligned to the European Qualifications Framework, have been developed for each programme and course. CRCS confirmed during the site visit that consideration is given to whether learning outcomes align with the Dublin Descriptors. This is supported by the Faculty Handbook, which confirms that learning outcomes must be in

accordance with the EQF and the Dublin Descriptors (Faculty Handbook, p. 16). A diploma supplement is issued to each graduate alongside their degree.

There are mobility opportunities for students and for faculty. CRCS welcomes WSU students on campus through a study abroad programme. Whilst CRCS students may also travel to WSU (to date, two have done so), it was noted during the on-site visit that logistical matters make this challenging: CRCS's terms do not align with WSU's semesters, and the significant cost of travel and fees can also pose a barrier. According to CRCS, students have already chosen to study abroad by coming to CRCS in Switzerland and are not interested in studying elsewhere. CRCS noted, however, that achievement of Swiss institutional accreditation could encourage further mobility among students.

During the site visit, the group of experts inquired how CRCS demonstrates fulfilment of [the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#).⁹ Institutional representatives were not familiar with the standards and guidelines. Nonetheless, the group of experts explored how CRCS incorporates the student-centred learning called for by the ESG into its provision. CRCS noted that it requires all faculty members to complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education, which develops tutors' creativity and encourages reflection upon how to incorporate students more within teaching and learning. During the on-site visit, CRCS also detailed students' input to the enhancement of teaching and learning through the term representative meetings and the student satisfaction survey. As set out elsewhere in this report, the group of experts would like to see additional details of actions taken by CRCS on the basis of such feedback.

Recognition of degrees under the Lisbon Recognition Convention was raised during the on-site visit, and CRCS pointed to its use of ECTS, implementation of the Dublin Descriptors and compliance with the requirements of the Bologna process. However, CRCS is currently ascribing 25 hours of learner effort per credit, with evidence during the on-site visit of some cases where the effort required is less than this. Furthermore, students are currently completing 33 ECTS credits per semester. The [ECTS User Guide](#)¹⁰ notes that the full-time workload of an academic year is 60 credits (i.e. 30 per semester) and that one ECTS credit is equivalent to 25-30 hours of learning effort. The group of experts recommends that CRCS adjust the allocation of learner effort per ECTS credit from the current 25 hours per credit to between 25 and 30 hours and ensure that no more than 30 ECTS are completed by each student per semester. The group of experts also observes that ECTS credits are not currently awarded for internships and recommends that CRCS implement the allocation of ECTS for internships.

If CRCS is accredited, the awarded titles for both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes will need to change to comply with the requirements of Swiss federal law. CRCS acknowledged this and confirmed that a transition plan is in place to facilitate the necessary changes for currently enrolled students. CRCS stated that the equivalence of qualifications of those graduates with double degrees will be relatively straightforward, but that the recognition of the qualifications of graduates with only one bachelor's degree (i.e. because they did not meet the requirements of WSU; fewer than 20%, according to CRCS) will be more complicated. The group of experts advises that clear measures should be put in place to ensure the recognition of equivalence of the qualifications of all CRCS graduates.

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

Recommendation #9: Review the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits awarded per semester to students, particularly in the context of internships.

⁹ https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

¹⁰ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1#>.

Recommendation #10: Introduce measures to ensure the recognition of equivalence of the qualifications of all CRCS graduates.

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.

From their reading of the SAR, it was clear to the experts that CRCS does not comply with the criteria for admission to Universities of Applied Sciences provided for by the HEdA, ch. 4, art. 25. Currently, applicants for CRCS's bachelor's programme must provide evidence of:

- Completion of their secondary higher education diploma,
- English language proficiency of a minimum of IELTS 5.5 or TOEFL iBT 55, or equivalent and
- Professional experience.

CRCS is aware that these criteria are not consistent with legislation. However, the institution intends to "gradually adapt" the third criterion mentioned above in order to fulfil Swiss federal requirements with regard to University of Applied Sciences Institute status (SAR, p. 59).

Transition to the new criterion is scheduled to occur before the end of 2023 to allow "a smooth transition from an enrolment perspective, while keeping in mind that most students make decisions about their bachelor's studies at least one year in advance, and that these new admission criteria impact 90+% of new CRCS students" (Ibid.). The following phased transition to comply with the relevant requirements is set out in the SAR:

- *"Until the end of 2022, students were asked to demonstrate work experience prior to entering the programme. Students without adequate work experience have been required to successfully complete two internships, scheduled during the first and second year of the Bachelor's program. A motivational letter and a CV presenting professional and personal experience support the assessment of this particular requirement. Students with prior work experience were evaluated for exemption from one or both of the two internships that were integrated into the Bachelor's program.*
- *From January 2023 through January 2024, the prior one-year work experience requirement is gradually being phased in from the previous requirement 5.75 based upon whether the students were accepted under previous or new admission criteria. Should new applicants not be in compliance with the one-year prior work experience requirement, an "Industry Immersion Year", a one-year practical program which includes an industry internship, will be compulsory prior to entering the full Bachelor's program.*
- *With no intake of new students anticipated for the April 2024 term, as of July 2024 all students will be expected either to present evidence of a minimum one-year relevant prior work experience or will be required to attend the Industry Immersion Year prior to entering the full Bachelor's program."*

Admissions requirements for the master's programme are as follows:

- A recognised bachelor's degree awarded by a university listed on the ECCTIS website. In 2023, a requirement that this be in a hospitality- or tourism-related discipline will be phased in.
- English-language proficiency of a minimum of IELTS 6.0, TOEFL iBT 67, or equivalent
- Professional and personal experience

Until the end of 2022, students were admitted based on having earned a recognised bachelor's degree in any field; as with the bachelor's programme, amendment to this requirement is planned to meet the criteria associated with the Swiss University of Applied Sciences Institute. Again, CRCS refers to a gradual transition, scheduled through 2023, from current requirements to the new ones:

- *“Throughout the year 2023, a requirement of having an industry-specific Bachelor's is gradually taking over from the previous requirement through a phase-in approach based upon whether the student was accepted under the previous or new admission criteria. Should new applicants have been accepted based on a non-hospitality or tourism Bachelor's degree, an “Intensive Hospitality Bridging Seminar” is compulsory upon admission to the Master's program.*
- *As of 2024, all students will be expected either to have earned a Bachelor's degree within the hospitality or tourism field, or to participate in the Intensive Hospitality Bridging Seminar”.*

With regard to the bachelor's programme, CRCS told the group of experts that no ECTS credits would be awarded towards practical experience attained during the planned Industry Immersion Year. However, representatives of the institution noted that if CRCS continues to offer a double degree with WSU, this Industry Immersion Year will be accepted by WSU as contributing credits towards its bachelor's degree programme. The group of experts also queried CRCS's plans for recognising the effort of students who have undertaken the Industry Immersion Year; CRCS responded that it is considering providing certification for completion of the year.

Having reviewed the SAR, the group of experts was under the impression that the above transition plans had already been decided, set in progress and communicated to prospective students through CRCS's website. However, when the group of experts reviewed admissions information provided on the website, they discovered that only the current admissions requirements are being communicated. During the on-site visit, CRCS confirmed that the institution plans to implement and communicate the new admissions requirements only if accreditation is granted, because the new condition could impact recruitment. A document outlining the details of the plan was provided to the expert peer group upon their request during the on-site visit.

The group of experts emphasises that the Industry Immersion Year is necessary and that, currently, CRCS does not comply with the law. Therefore, the group of experts has formulated a condition. They note that failing to provide adequate notice of, and clear and transparent information about, the Industry Immersion Year could have a detrimental impact on students coming to CRCS from abroad, particularly given the envisaged potential increase in student fees for the bachelor's degree of approximately €25,000.

Language competence requirements for admission were also discussed during the on-site visit. The expert peer group queried whether the relatively low requirement for entry to the bachelor's degree (IELTS 5.5) posed any challenges for teaching and learning – in particular with regard to written assignments. CRCS confirmed that it integrates training and teaching and supports students in navigating any challenges and, while acknowledging that some students do find assignments very challenging, it noted that the benefits of the English-language supports provided are evident by the second term, by which stage students are very well prepared to write a research paper of 2,000 words.

Requirements and procedures with regard to grading are set out clearly in the SAR and in the Faculty Handbook; during the site visit students confirmed that they are happy with the information provided to them with regard to admissions, curricula and exams. They noted that the online e-learning platform provides access to information about all courses and guidelines for exams and preparing for them. They further noted that introductory lectures are provided to

students who move campus, during which regulations and campus rules are explained. Prior to commencing studies, students are told which courses they will be taking.

The group of experts notes that the Academic Program Guide (Fall 2022) stipulates as a condition of graduation from the master's programmes "fulfilment of all admission criteria" – this was raised with CRCS during the on-site visit, who maintained that there was an error in wording. The group of experts notes that the wording in the programme guide must be rectified to confirm that all admissions criteria must be met prior to enrolment on CRCS programmes.

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

Condition #6: CRCS ensures that the admission criteria for the Swiss University of Applied Sciences within the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (HEdA), ch. 4, art. 25, are respected and clearly communicated. In particular, CRCS expects its applicants to have one year of professional experience in a related profession.

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.

The distribution of resources available to CRCS is based on a principle of "shared resources" between CRCS and CAAS.

Human resources

Staff and faculty are shared between CRCS and CAAS. The percentage of all staff time allocated to CRCS is 40%, with 60% of overall staff time allocated to CAAS. Of the total academic staff time, 54% is allocated to CRCS and 46% to CAAS (*iv. Clear allocation of any other shared resources between CAAS and CRCS*). CRCS shared plans to separate itself from CAAS to create two legal entities, but CRCS and CAAS "live together", sharing both campuses and resources (physical and human). The group of experts urges CRCS to implement its separation plan for the schools to create two separate legal entities as expediently as possible. A condition of accreditation has been made under Standard 3.1.

At the time of the SAR's submission, the institution had 103 members of staff (74 full-time equivalent; FTE) – 53 of these are operations staff members, while 50 are faculty and administration staff members (29.8 FTE). Of the 22 faculty members, six are associate professors with PhDs, five are full-time teaching faculty, 10 are part-time faculty, and one is a visiting faculty member from WSU, meaning that the ratio of academic staff members to students is 1:10. The average number of students in each class is 20 (SAR, p. 63). Following from a recommendation in CRCS's last application for institutional accreditation under the HEdA, CRCS increased the percentage of PhD faculty teaching theory courses from 25% in 2011 to 60% in 2021.

As set out above, there is a small research team in place, comprising the six associate professors (of which one is Head of Research), who were, in the main, recruited between March and November 2022. This team has taken the first steps in producing research outputs for CRCS. The group of experts notes that some of the associate professors are producing state-of-the-art publications, while others are not yet at this point and have yet to publish. In 2022, the research team developed 12 original research publications and engaged in seven translational research practices (Ibid.).

During the on-site visit, research team members confirmed that there is a process in place for requesting funding from the Head of Research; this is set out at a relatively high level in the CRCS Research Program document (CRCS Research Program, p. 9) and CRCS might consider providing additional detail of the process required. There is also a need for the research team to grow in terms of productivity and to publish research that covers all four focus areas that CRCS has defined, i.e. entrepreneurship, sustainability, leadership, and inclusivity and visionary thinking among business leaders and scholars (CRCS Research Program, p. 5).

The faculty workload policy is set out in the Faculty Handbook (Faculty Handbook, p. 13). A standardised baseline of 40% research, 50% teaching (defined as 10 three-credit courses per calendar year) and 10% service is provided for research faculty, while the expectation for teaching faculty is 85% teaching (17 three-credit courses per calendar year), 5% research and 10% service. As set out above, the group of experts finds that the current standardised baseline may not allow sufficient time for research faculty to conduct serious research; they encourage CRCS to redefine the parameters to support the research team and progress CRCS's research plans (see also standard 3.1). The group of experts notes that this would be facilitated by the scope allowed for within the Faculty Handbook (p. 13) to adjust teaching loads for various reasons, including *inter alia* research activity, professional service and academic unit service.

The group of experts explored the potential impact of accreditation on the allocation of human and financial resources and any potential conflicts. CRCS representatives were quite positive about their capacity to separate these out, noting that the more practical courses are provided on the Bouveret campus, with Brig primarily hosting the hospitality students. The group of experts was told during the on-site visit that, in spite of the shared faculty and other resources, there is a very clear distinction between the needs and requirements of culinary students and those of hospitality students (*On-site visit, Day 1, Session 5*). The group of experts remains not entirely convinced that the separation of the two entities and the avoidance of conflict in the allocation of resources will be as straightforward as CRCS envisages.

Infrastructure

CRCS shares its campuses with CAAS. The campuses are leased. The Bouveret campus (12,708 square metres) comprises a main building with classrooms, a learning resource centre and dormitories, as well as the Mosimann Collection. The Apicius building is also on campus, and houses the kitchens and restaurants. The smaller Brig campus (7,150 square metres) was renovated in 2021 to upgrade various facilities and student dormitories. It contains two buildings with classrooms, an auditorium, meeting rooms, a computer lab and learning resource centre, and two restaurants. The on-site dormitory contains 216 single rooms and additional facilities for students.

CRCS plans to expand the Bouveret campus to add a new building that will include additional bedrooms and classrooms. The group of experts had an opportunity to tour the Bouveret campus during the preliminary visit. The physical library is housed above the Mosimann Collection and boasts a rather modest collection of books, many of which are focused on the culinary arts. CRCS might consider developing the collection further. CRCS noted during the on-site visit that it was unlikely that there would be any changes to the physical infrastructure if accreditation is successful, given the recent (and ongoing) renovations on the Brig campus and the building project planned for the Bouveret campus.

CRCS draws upon a range of shared support services that are provided by SEG Shared Services AG to the schools within SEG's portfolio to provide economies of scale (SAR, p. 26). These include services and guidance in areas such as human resources, marketing, finance and IT. The individuals in these positions report to the Dean (p. 26). During the on-site visit, CRCS representatives noted that the shared services between the four schools in the SEG portfolio represent a good use of budget. A service-level agreement is in place between SEG and CRCS to clarify responsibilities and expectations, and CRCS stated that there is a very

clear division between SEG and CRCS, with the relevant decisions in respect of CRCS made by the Dean and the Advisory Board.

Financial resources

CRCS relies on “a performant reliant student recruitment process to ensure it generates the revenues necessary to support the development and delivery of [its] services and practices” (SAR, p. 37). Tuition fees are considered and revised by the Supervisory Committee, CRCS management and the relevant departments on an annual basis. Student numbers are forecast and the predicted associated revenues are aligned with CRCS’s three-year strategic business plan. The SAR notes that the plan covers both the institution’s short-term operations and requirements for future growth and projects.

Financial information is presented periodically and reviewed by the Supervisory Committee, while an external audit of financial statements is conducted annually by Deloitte SA. Following this, the information is broken down and allocated to CRCS and CAAS to calculate their respective standalone information (SAR, p. 66).

Whilst the SAR states that CRCS “has been operating in a financially sustainable manner over the past 40 years despite a variety of geopolitical and health crises” (SAR, p. 37), the group of experts notes that the past three years have been a challenging period for CRCS and that CRCS is currently operating at a deficit. Student numbers have decreased over the past few years (down 43% in 2021 and down 8% in 2022 [5.02. KPI Dashboard – CRCS KPI]). The most recent figures show that CRCS’s graduation rate is 66%. In the short term, CRCS is working to adjust its offering to control costs – for example, by bundling classes – but the group of experts notes that a more sustainable solution will be required.

During the on-site visit, CRCS maintained that quality is not dependent upon reaching enrolment targets, and reaffirmed that SEG provides financial support as necessary and is prepared to take the loss. The institution outlined recruitment plans for the next number of years, referring to CRCS’s desire to build upon and consolidate what it has. A growth in student numbers is planned, but it is not envisaged that recruitment will be “heavy”. Resources will be allocated to important elements such as research.

The SAR states (p. 4) that CRCS “benefits from SEG services”, but “remains independent with organizational and governance decision-making authorities at the College and at operational level”. Each of the four schools in SEG’s portfolio is “independent” and “self-funded” (*Preliminary Visit*); thus, each school is expected to cover its own expenses with the revenue that it generates. However, the group of experts also notes that if there is a temporary lack of students, SEG can act as a temporary sponsor (*Preliminary visit*). The SAR further states that “[s]o far, having two schools combined in one legal entity has helped to offset the temporarily lower results of one school with the other” (SAR, p. 66).

The group of experts acknowledges that events over the past three years have contributed to CRCS’s inability to achieve its forecast level of growth for the past two years. This has had a significant impact on CRCS’s financial health; CRCS’s financial documents (submitted alongside the SAR) show a significant deficit for 2022 and forecast a further significant deficit for 2023 (5.91, *2018–2022 Summary Finance*). The group of experts suggests that CRCS should consider what steps it can take to meet its recruitment targets, as well as other ways to ensure its economic sustainability that are not dependent upon support from SEG or CAAS.

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

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.

At the time of submission of the SAR, 60% of theory-teaching faculty held a PhD in 2022. Faculty turnover was generally around 15% annually, while 10% of the staff had been with the College for over 25 years (SAR, p. 70).

CRCS's Faculty Handbook sets out processes for faculty recruitment, appraisal and development and clarifies responsibilities for areas such as planning and writing module handbooks. CRCS confirmed during the on-site visit that the Faculty Handbook has the status of a regulation for faculty members and that its content is binding. CRCS might consider adding a clarification to this effect within the handbook itself, as well as ensuring that this is explicitly stipulated within the standard faculty contract template.

Descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of the various categories of faculty member are set out within the job descriptions document provided to the group of experts alongside the SAR (5.82 *Job Descriptions Faculty*). The roles listed are associate professor and teaching faculty. The group of experts notes that teaching faculty are expected to have a master's degree qualification "or the equivalent qualification in the relevant discipline with a minimum of five years' professional experience in the field, alongside a potential for excellence in teaching and proficiency in their field"; associate professors must demonstrate attainment of a PhD qualification or the equivalent in the relevant discipline with a minimum of five years' professional experience in the field. An expectation that individuals occupying either role would be "active member[s] of school committees" is also set out in the job descriptions.

Details of the standard workloads associated with each role are set out above under standard 4.1, and the SAR confirms that the Assistant Dean and Program Manager make teaching assignments based on each faculty member's topic-specific qualification and experience, the best interests of students, other demands on faculty members' time and the demands that a specific course assignment might involve (SAR, p. 69).

Recruitment by CRCS is based on a "shared decision-making approach" (SAR, p. 69). A special assignment committee – the Recruitment Committee – is convened in each case. This committee comprises members of faculty and staff and a student representative.

Processes for the evaluation of faculty performance include an annual performance appraisal as well as formal peer-to-peer teaching evaluations, which also occur annually (during the summer term). Further detail of both processes is provided under standard 3.2 above. Professional development needs and opportunities are identified through the appraisal process (Faculty Handbook, p. 12).

A route to promotion is provided via the appraisal process. The process and criteria are set out within the Faculty Handbook (pp. 11-12). Faculty members are eligible to be considered for promotion once they have completed five years' employment post-recruitment, or five years since their last promotion. It is a criterion of the promotion process that the faculty member must demonstrate a minimum composite score of "meets expectations" above 80% for the period of review. The timeline can be amended in exceptional cases upon the shared decision of the Academic Board, the Dean and the faculty committee.

In addition to the above-cited criterion, faculty members must also demonstrate as a minimum requirement that their performance "create[s] visibility and reputation for [themselves] and the school" through *inter alia* the provision of invited presentations or keynote addresses at industry events, or through co-authored research with colleagues outside of SEG.

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

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.

The SAR outlines the supports provided to faculty and staff members for their professional development, including the induction process for new faculty and staff members. As set out under standard 4.2 and confirmed during the on-site visit, training gaps and needs are identified through the annual appraisal process. A number of types of professional development are listed within the SAR, including conferences, workshops (for example, related to fire safety and emergency response training or IT web security) and leadership training for management. (In 2019 and 2020, this comprised participation in a series of SEG-delivered workshops on “Developing Performance through a Genuine People Management Culture”).

During the on-site visit, the group of experts learned that faculty members are expected to engage in one piece of continuous professional development (CPD) per year as a mandatory requirement. This is not clearly indicated within the Faculty Handbook, and, during the on-site visit, the group of experts asked how CRCS communicates to faculty that CPD is mandatory. CRCS responded that faculty are informed that there is a pedagogical fund for CPD, and that lecturers are reminded that they may apply for funding for CPD, both individually and at group level. The group of experts recommends that an express reference to this requirement be included in that document. This should make clear to faculty members that CPD is obligatory rather than a voluntary pursuit.

During the on-site visit, faculty members confirmed that they engage in professional development. Examples ranged from a course on Excel to short courses through Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) or Harvard Business School. One faculty member in the session confirmed that they are enrolled on a PhD programme, and another stated that they are considering enrolling on a PhD programme, with the full support of the Dean and Assistant Dean.

It was confirmed during the on-site visit that faculty members who are new to teaching and do not already possess a qualification in education must complete a postgraduate certificate in education provided by CRCS’s partner, the University of Derby. At the time of submission of the SAR, 35 members of CRCS faculty had completed the postgraduate certificate. There is also an option to engage in a programme leading to a master’s degree in education, which is also delivered by the University of Derby. Teacher training is provided to instructors coming to CRCS from an industry background: At the time of submission of the SAR, 21 members of staff had completed the programme (SAR, p. 72).

Despite the measures taken, the section on professional development within the Faculty Handbook is rather vague – it states that faculty are welcome to discuss plans for development with management and that interested faculty members must submit a Staff Development Form to the Dean, Assistant Dean or Program Manager. The group of experts suggests that this section of the handbook could be further developed to provide clarity to faculty members about the process and criteria for applying for participation in CPD and the basis upon which requests will be granted.

The SAR notes that CRCS’s establishment of a research team has allowed CRCS to launch associate professor development activities – it is not clear what specifically these activities constitute, though the SAR does reference the provision of continuous feedback and coaching, and participation in relevant research training and development opportunities such as CRCS’s International Research Round Table (SAR, p. 74). The SAR notes that faculty members may request funding for research training and development from the HR department or from the

Research Committee. It confirms that two associate professors completed the [Wharton Global Faculty Development Program¹¹](#) in 2021 and 2022.

Details of the professional development opportunities available to early-career researchers to develop their skills and competence, and of specific criteria that must be met to facilitate promotion, were not evident within the Faculty Handbook, nor was adequate detail provided during the on-site visit. The criteria for promotion do not distinguish between early-career research faculty, teaching faculty and more established members of faculty. It is therefore unclear to early-career researchers the nature or extent of activity in which they should or must engage in order to achieve promotion. The group of experts has recommended a condition of accreditation in this regard.

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

Condition #7: CRCS establishes a concept for the promotion and career development of junior faculty and ensures that it is communicated effectively.

Recommendation #11: *Set out a clear requirement within the CRCS Faculty Handbook that all faculty members are required to engage in one piece of continuous professional development (CPD) per year, and ensure that faculty members have the resources (time) to do so.*

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.

The SAR notes that CRCS's size is beneficial in enabling it to bring together the institutional community regularly to provide face-to-face communication on the quality system and other matters of importance. Such opportunities include:

- Two staff meetings every term (minutes are shared with all staff).
- Course evaluations, which are discussed individually with faculty members once per term. The averages arising from course evaluations are also communicated to students in the Student Ambassador Committee meeting and through notice boards.
- A newsletter circulated to faculty, staff, alumni and current students eight times per year.

The findings of external examiner reports are also communicated to faculty members, relevant members of staff and student representatives during Program Committee Meetings and through meeting minutes, which are saved on the shared drive (SAR).

The recently updated Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) was shared and discussed with staff and students through focus groups. This was followed by the dissemination of a survey on quality to determine how involved faculty and staff feel in the development and implementation of the various quality processes (SAR, p. 75).

The group of experts notes that 15 members of staff/faculty responded to the survey. Eleven respondents responded to the question, "Do you feel that you are involved in the quality assurance process?" with "yes". The results provided to the group of experts are somewhat misaligned with those presented in the promotional discourse of the SAR, where it is stated that

¹¹ <https://global.wharton.upenn.edu/global-initiatives/wharton-global-faculty-development-program/>

“the results show that the faculty and staff (93%) feel involved [in the quality assurance process]”. CRCS’s draft Communications Strategy notes that the theme of communication was recurrent in response to the question, “How can we improve our quality culture?” The group of experts observes that the response rate to the survey, which was for both faculty and staff, is rather low and suggests that more extensive communication of the survey throughout the institution would be advisable in future.

The group of experts was also provided with the results of an employee satisfaction survey conducted in summer 2022, which, in one question, explored the awareness of staff and faculty members of the institutional mission. There were 50 responses to this survey, in which 42 confirmed that they were aware of CRCS’s mission, and five responded that they were not (it appears that three respondents did not answer this question). CRCS attributes the high recognition rate for the mission statement among faculty and staff to its efforts to communicate through focus groups, meetings and posters. Within the qualitative responses to the survey, however, untransparent communication is mentioned several times by respondents, and the draft Communications Strategy notes that the survey question regarding open and honest two-way communication in the college “...got less agreement than most of the other statements” (*CRCS Communication Strategy*, p. 6).

With regard to external communication, CRCS shares information through its website, CRCS’s newsletter and one-to-one meetings. Regular meetings, email updates and the annual report are also referenced as opportunities for communicating with external stakeholders (SAR, p. 75).

The SAR refers to the publication of CRCS’s Institutional Direction diagram and QAF on its website. Whilst the institutional direction [could be located on the website at the time of writing](#)¹² (28 March 2023), the QAF could not. In general, there is quite a lot of information missing from the website and the group of experts notes that it is rather complicated to navigate. This will be discussed further under standard 5.2.

As noted elsewhere in this report, the group of experts would like to have seen further evidence of closure of the PDCA loop and the impact of the quality assurance system. The group of experts advises that more thorough and transparent communication of actions taken on the basis of both internal and external evaluations is needed. A review of other information provided to external stakeholders is also necessary – for example, the Wikipedia entry on CRCS.

Throughout the on-site visit, there was an impression that internal stakeholder representatives (including students and alumni) had been comprehensively briefed prior to interview sessions. This stifled discussion during the on-site visit sessions and gave rise to an impression of a dearth of transparency and a lack of trust on the institution’s part towards internal stakeholders. Given this perceived lack of transparency (which is reflected in the qualitative responses by employees in the employee satisfaction survey referenced above), the group of experts also found it challenging at times to develop a relationship of trust with CRCS.

The Communications Strategy 2023 is as yet incomplete: the internal communications plan for 2023 is “to be determined”. The group of experts requests that it be finalised and implemented.

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

Condition #8: CRCS finalizes and implements its communication strategy (internal and external) and ensures that the information it provides is transparent, complete, well-structured and honest.

¹² <https://www.cesarritzcolleges.edu/en/hotel-management-programs/quality-assurance/>

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.

Information about CRCS's programmes is communicated to students and prospective students through the website. The SAR notes that the information shared on the website includes learning outcomes, modules, admission criteria and awards, and partner universities involved in delivery. The group of experts notes that the details of the learning outcomes shared on the website are rather vague and high-level; they are presented in the form of a diagram rather than setting out the concrete learning outcomes themselves. [Figure 4 below shows the learning outcomes presented for the bachelor's programme; an identical diagram is displayed to show the master's programme learning outcomes.](#)¹³

Learning outcomes



Fig. 4: Example of how programme learning outcomes are communicated through CRCS's website

Information regarding CRCS's research activities is also communicated through the website (SAR, p. 77); however, as noted above, [whilst papers are referenced on the relevant webpage, they are not hyperlinked.](#)¹⁴ In addition, some of the papers referred to were published prior to the authors' employment with CRCS and prior to the establishment of CRCS's research department.

During the on-site visit, the group of experts needed to request access to documentation that should already have been published on CRCS's website (for example, criteria and regulations for scholarships). The group of experts observes that CRCS's website does not contain any information with regard to equality, diversity and inclusion; there is no information about how CRCS resolves allegations of bullying or harassment, nor is the Faculty Handbook published on the website. It is noted in the SAR that CRCS plans to publish additional information relating to quality assurance on its website; this includes data on retention, graduation and alumni. The group of experts welcomes this intention and encourages CRCS to consider what additional information could be included.

The group of experts observes that the tone of the website and of other communications to external stakeholders is quite promotional. They recommend a review of all communications to external stakeholders (in particular, the website) to ensure that the information provided is clearly presented and accurate.

If CRCS is successful in its application for accreditation, it will need to revise admissions requirements relating to its bachelor's and master's programmes to ensure compliance with

¹³ <https://www.cesarritzcolleges.edu/en/hotel-management-programs/bachelor-of-arts-hospitality-management/>

¹⁴ <https://www.cesarritzcolleges.edu/en/research/>

HEdA, ch. 4, art. 25. Reference to a potential revision to admissions requirements cannot currently be found on CRCS's website. This could potentially disadvantage prospective students.

The group of experts notes that the above examples reflect an overall lack of transparency and openness in CRCS's communication – both internally and externally. This was also apparent during the on-site visit. The group of experts observes a general tendency of CRCS to present communications – both internal and external – in a way that is promotional; this also reveals an inclination to avoid genuinely self-critical reflection on its activities in general, and its quality assurance system in particular. The group of experts emphasises to CRCS that no institution is ideal and that transparent communication and self-reflection is required in order to identify and implement enhancements to an institution's provision and operations. The experts stress the need for CRCS to develop and implement an internal and external communication plan. The experts do not repeat here the condition set out in 5.1, which, when applied, should go a long way towards improving the situation. However, they recommend that CRCS revise its website to make it more accessible.

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

Recommendation #12: *Revise the CRCS website so that published information is user-friendly and easily accessible.*

5. Outline of the strengths and challenges of the system and an overall assessment

5.1 Strengths

Dedication of faculty and staff and the institution's ambition in striving for accreditation

The expert peer group found noteworthy CRCS' ambition to achieve accreditation, even though they are at a rather early stage of their quality assurance journey. The peers also noted with approval the dedication and enthusiasm evident among faculty and staff and their willingness to participate in the evaluation process. This commitment was also notable in the group's conversations with students, who expressed their gratitude for the efforts of faculty and staff in helping to establish and run clubs such as the Innovation Club.

Open culture of communication

The group of experts heard much about CRCS's open-door communication policy during the site visit, which is also set out in the Faculty Handbook (p. 15). CRCS's size lends itself well to the use of informal communication with and between faculty, staff and students, and the expert peer group heard from students that they appreciate the policy and feel comfortable approaching teachers and staff members with any issues that they encounter. However, CRCS must be alert to the potential risks associated with an over-reliance on informal communication, which are referenced by the group of experts within this report.

Shared resources

The expert peer group commends CRCS for investing in new buildings and for its renovation of facilities on both the Bouveret and Brig campuses to ensure that physical resources are fit-for-purpose.

Positive relationships with partner universities and industry

The group of experts met with a representative of UoD as well as a former leader of WSU (who is a current member of the Supervisory Committee) during the on-site visit. Both emphasised the very positive, open and collaborative relationships that they have with CRCS.

5.2 Challenges

Complexity of the quality assurance system

As currently framed, CRCS's quality assurance framework is complicated; it is unclear how the constituent elements fit together and how, as currently implemented, the framework supports the institution in ensuring that the quality loop is closed. The Open Communication Policy does not follow any predefined decision-making structure; some actions are taken following suggestions, but feedback is not systematic. Stakeholder voices are incorporated into institutional governance, but the system of shared governance is complex and there can be overlap and confusion between the remits and responsibilities of individual committees. The group of experts advises CRCS to work to consolidate and simplify its committee structure and to systematise and formalise its processes for collecting feedback to ensure that the entire PDCA cycle is implemented more systematically in all areas.

Relationship between CRCS and CAAS

CRCS and CAAS are currently inextricably linked as part of the same legal entity; the two schools share campuses and services, as well as both operational and academic staff. While there are plans to carry out a separation of the two schools into distinct legal entities, given the extent to which their operations and activities are intertwined, the group of experts is of the opinion that such separation will likely be more complicated than CRCS currently envisages. The group of experts reminds CRCS that, as clarified during the on-site visit, the application for institutional accreditation relates only to the accreditation of CRCS, and not to CAAS.

Admissions requirements

CRCS is aware that accreditation as a University of Applied Sciences Institute under Swiss federal law will require adjustments to admissions requirements for both its bachelor's and master's programmes. Having reviewed the SAR, the group of experts was under the impression that plans for this transition had already been decided, set in motion and communicated to prospective students through CRCS's website. However, when the group of experts reviewed the admissions information provided on the website, they discovered that only the current admissions requirements are communicated. This is particularly serious when it comes to the requirement for work experience prior to enrolment on the bachelor's programme. The group of experts emphasises to the institution that the implementation of the Industry Immersion Year for those students with no relevant prior work experience is necessary and a requirement of the HEdA. They note that failing to provide adequate notice of and clear and transparent information about the Industry Immersion Year could have a detrimental impact on students coming to CRCS from abroad.

Research

CRCS commenced its research strategy in earnest in 2021, and the group of experts notes that some progress has been made. Six associate professors have been recruited to engage in research, and a research department and strategy, with associated KPIs, have been established. This work is beginning to produce results. There is potential for CRCS's research endeavours to develop, grow and contribute significant benefit to the institution, its provision and its students. However, CRCS's research activity is at a very early stage and lacks maturity. The visibility of outputs is not high: some members of the department have never published. Significant support will be required to ensure that CRCS's research activities reach a level commensurate with the status of University of Applied Sciences Institute.

Gender equality and equal opportunities

Equal opportunity is mostly understood by CRCS as valuing a diversity of nationalities and cultures within its institution. When discussing equality, diversity and inclusion in the SAR, CRCS often refers to the student and staff community on campus. The group of experts urges CRCS to move beyond the current understanding of equal opportunities as referring primarily to ethnicity towards a holistic and comprehensive definition that incorporates all forms of diversity – for example, disability and neurodivergence, as well as prevention of harassment and discrimination. A reading of the *Educate, Communicate, Celebrate* strategy shows that the institution is still in its infancy when it comes to equality. It sets out as an action for 2023 the development of an inclusion and diversity strategy and an action plan for all sections of the strategy. The group of experts notes that the strategy and action plan as currently framed are rather high-level and very sparse in terms of content. No meaningful objectives or targets could be discerned within either document and the strategy and action plan are not mentioned within the strategy for 2022-2025. A significant amount of work is required to develop the strategy and action plan into meaningful guidance and direction for incorporating considerations on equal opportunities and gender equality into CRCS's provision and operations.

Sustainability

CRCS has a Sustainability Management Plan (SMP) in place. Although the SAR references various types of sustainability incorporated into this plan, including environmental and sociocultural sustainability, the SMP itself focusses primarily on environmental sustainability. The SAR notes that social sustainability is embedded within the SMP; however, this is not immediately evident from a review of that document. Whilst the SAR references the economically sustainable way in which CRCS has operated in the past, the group of experts notes that the accounts provided show significant deficits for 2022 and forecast a deficit for 2023. The group of experts also notes that some of CRCS's implementation of plans in this area are incomplete: CRCS has attained "Green Globe" certification for its Bouveret campus and plans to achieve certification for its Brig campus. The group of experts notes that accreditation is holistic and relates to all provision and locations of CRCS; the plan to extend Green Globe certification is welcome. Ultimately, the group of experts saw little evidence that CRCS has considered sustainability types that extend beyond environmental sustainability. CRCS must define an action plan derived from the institutional strategy that sets out objectives for the enhancement of social, economic and ecological sustainability and ensure its implementation and monitoring on both campuses.

Communication

The group of experts noted numerous areas in which information was not clearly and transparently communicated or readily accessible to the relevant stakeholders. The website provides an example: in their review of the website, the group of experts found it complicated to navigate and that information was presented in an overly promotional manner. For example, the same rather vague learning outcomes are set out for both the bachelor's and master's programmes, and these are presented by way of a diagram. During, and in advance of, the on-site visit, the group of experts often needed to request access to documentation that should have been readily available on CRCS's website. The group of experts also notes that, internally, actions taken on the basis of student feedback could be more clearly and transparently communicated to students. The group of experts welcomes plans to publish additional quality assurance-related information on the CRCS website. They urge CRCS to take note of their comments on gaps in internal and external communication when finalising its Communications Strategy 2023.

Briefing of stakeholders

Throughout the on-site visit, the expert peer group had a strong impression that many internal stakeholder representatives (including students and alumni) had been comprehensively briefed to provide prepared answers. This stifled discussion during the on-site visit sessions and gave rise to an impression of a dearth of transparency and a lack of trust for internal stakeholders.

Given the promotional language used by the institution during interviews and in the SAR, the group of experts also found it challenging at times to develop a relationship of trust with CRCS.

6. Recommendations for the future development of quality assurance

The group of experts makes the following recommendations to CRCS for the enhancement of its quality assurance system:

Recommendation #1: Align CRCS and Swiss Education Group (SEG) visions, missions and strategic plans that concern CRCS to optimise the direction of the quality assurance system.

Recommendation #2: Strengthen the strategic position and identity of CRCS, and ensure that any action taken is prudent, self-reflective and consistent with the institution's mission and values.

Recommendation #3: Act proactively and self-reflectively to address gaps, but also to build on the institution's strengths in the long term.

Recommendation #4: Ensure that CRCS's Self-assessment Report Action Plan is adjusted and fully implemented.

Recommendation #5: Engage in regular critical reflection to optimise the use of the data collected and to make the best use of it for the institution.

Recommendation #6: Develop a participation charter to reinforce the guarantee of independence and the right of participation of the various stakeholders.

Recommendation #7: Ensure that all documentation detailing the relationship between Swiss Education Group (SEG) and CRCS confirms the independence and autonomy of CRCS in its activities, including activity associated with teaching and research.

Recommendation #8: Ensure that the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) cycle is completed for all evaluations that CRCS conducts regarding its teaching, research and services, and that each stage of the cycle is documented.

Recommendation #9: Review the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits awarded per semester to students, particularly in the context of internships.

Recommendation #10: Introduce measures to ensure the recognition of equivalence of the qualifications of all CRCS graduates.

Recommendation #11: Set out a clear requirement within the CRCS Faculty Handbook that all faculty members are required to engage in one piece of continuous professional development (CPD) per year, and ensure that faculty members have the resources (time) to do so.

Recommendation #12: Revise the CRCS website so that published information is user-friendly and easily accessible.

7. Accreditation proposal of the group of experts

Based on the Self-assessment Report of César Ritz Colleges Switzerland (CRCS) of December 2022 and the on-site visit that took place from 6 to 7 March 2023, the group of experts proposes that the agency grant CRCS accreditation subject to the following conditions:

Condition #1 (Standard 2.1): CRCS simplifies and reorganises the quality assurance system and associated processes, ensuring their systematisation and formalisation, to improve their anchoring, implementation and communication and to guarantee robust decision-making processes.

Condition #2 (Standard 2.4): CRCS defines an action plan derived from its institutional strategy to ensure social, economic and ecological sustainability and ensures its implementation and monitoring on both campuses.

Condition #3 (Standard 2.5): CRCS establishes an action plan for the promotion of equal opportunity and gender equality derived from its institutional strategy and ensures its implementation and monitoring on both campuses.

Condition #4 (Standard 3.1): CRCS renames the degrees awarded by CAAS in accordance with the legal requirements in Switzerland, or carries out the complete separation of CRCS and Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland (CAAS) to ensure that the institutions are totally independent at all levels (legal, administrative, financial, etc.).

Condition #5 (Standard 3.1): CRCS establishes a clear plan of action to provide appropriate conditions for research and to ensure that research is nurtured and continues to develop (e.g. CRCS could increase the amount of protected time dedicated to research and insert this percentage into the job description, establish a clear budget line for the necessary funds dedicated to research or ensure that all of those involved in research publish, participate in colloquia or conferences and present peer-reviewed results). CRCS also creates an enabling environment that ensures researchers have access to the necessary resources (i.e. relevant databases, funding for conference participation, etc.).

Condition #6 (Standard 3.4): CRCS ensures that the admission criteria for the Swiss University of Applied Sciences within the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (HEdA), ch. 4, art. 25, are respected and clearly communicated. In particular, CRCS expects its applicants to have one year of professional experience in a related profession.

Condition #7 (Standard 4.3): CRCS establishes a concept for the promotion and career development of junior faculty and ensures that it is communicated effectively.

Condition #8 (Standards 5.1 and 5.2): CRCS finalizes and implements its communication strategy (internal and external) and ensures that the information it provides is transparent, complete, well-structured and honest.

Prior to arriving at its recommendation, the group of experts engaged in lengthy discussions. Following a great deal of hesitation, which it shared with CRCS during the debriefing of the on-site visit, the group of experts decided to recommend accreditation with a large number of conditions. In order to give the college a chance to meet the conditions, the group of experts recommends a timeframe of three years for the fulfilment of the conditions. The follow-up review to determine whether the conditions have been met will take the form of a shortened on-site visit (a half day) conducted by three experts.



Section D

Position statement of CRCS

16 June 2023





Dr. Christoph Grolimund, Director
Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ)
Effingerstrasse 15
3001 Bern

Le Bouveret, June 16, 2023

Dear Dr. Grolimund,

On behalf of the entire team at César Ritz Colleges Switzerland (CRCS), I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all who have been involved with our application for HES accreditation and its review process to date. In particular, we value the comprehensive analysis and thoughtful feedback offered by the group of experts, namely Prof. Dr. Liliane Michalik (peer leader), Ms. Krumma Jonsdottir, Prof. Dr. Patricia Pol, Prof. Dr. Andreas Liebrich, and Ms Fanny Tang (student member).

Following the well-planned and organized documentation procedures and campus visits on February 7 and March 6-7, 2023, we have now received the external assessment report and AAQ's proposal. Upon review, we have found it to be very thorough and containing both valuable insights and recommendations that will be helpful in our planning and decision-making moving forward. Particularly, we take note that many of the areas evidenced by the group of experts represent opportunities for improvement our institution has already carefully identified and acknowledged in our strategic priorities, action plans and the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) submitted for the present accreditation process; this is testimony of the ability of CRCS to self-reflect and identify the areas that can be strengthened, as well as design and implement remedial plans for them.

CRCS is unquestionably committed to the accreditation process now and in the future, and deems each of the conditions and recommendations to be invaluable feedback about our institution. On both campuses we have already begun working to implement changes addressing them, and have established a time-bound Action Plans. Additionally, we respond below to each individual condition phrased by the group of experts:

- 1. Condition 1 (re Standard 2.1): CRCS simplifies and reorganises the quality assurance system and associated processes, ensuring their systematisation and formalisation, to improve their anchoring, implementation, and communication and to guarantee robust decision-making processes.*

CRCS has defined and will implement the necessary actions that will lead to improved effectiveness and efficiency of the governance and internal quality assurance systems so that they successfully support each other in bridging strategic and operations management and support evidence-based decision making; we will also continue our efforts in systematizing feedback collection and action-taking in order to increase both trust and transparency of all stakeholders in the fact that feedback leads to improvement.

- 2. Condition 2 (re Standard 2.4): CRCS defines an action plan derived from its institutional strategy to ensure social, economic, and ecological sustainability and ensures its implementation and monitoring on both campuses.*

CRCS will broaden its interpretation of the SDGs and take a holistic approach to the incorporation of a wider range of considerations in its operations, in addition to the measures already reflected in our Strategic and Action plans. We will also revisit the monitoring and reporting components of our Strategic Planning process to ensure that the progress against the defined priorities is measured in a timely manner.

3. Condition 3 (Standard 2.5): CRCS establishes an action plan for the promotion of equal opportunity and gender equality derived from its institutional strategy and ensures its implementation and monitoring on both campuses.

CRCS will revisit its system of policies to ensure that they actively promote and encourage diversity and inclusion and discourage discrimination; we will also ensure that specific goals for diversity, inclusion, and equality will be included in the strategic plan in order to continue enforcing the commitment that that college has already demonstrated to equal opportunity and gender equality.

4. Condition 4 (re Standard 3.1): CRCS renames the degrees awarded by CAAS in accordance with the legal requirements in Switzerland or carries out the complete separation of CRCS and Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland (CAAS) to ensure that that the institutions are totally independent at all levels (legal, administrative, financial etc.).

Both CRCS and CAAS have identified sufficient reasons to separate into two different legal entities, as well as various benefits that could be realized by doing so. We certainly appreciate and agree with the experts' several comments on the potential challenges of separating institutions that are housed in the same facilities and with some shared staff, but will proceed with a separation in spite of its foreseeable difficulties. In consultation with authorities in Valais, this was identified in 2022 as the most appropriate action, and initial steps are already either completed or well underway.

5. Condition 5 (re Standard 3.1): CRCS establishes a clear plan of action to provide appropriate conditions for research and to ensure that research is nurtured and continues to develop (e.g., ...). CRCS also creates an enabling environment that ensures researchers have access to the necessary resources (i.e., ...).

The college will revisit its current arrangements in terms of resources and incentives dedicated to research in order to enforce the role of research activity among its core activities, in line with CRCS's progress toward positioning itself as a University of Applied Science Institute.

6. Condition 6 (re Standard 3.4): CRCS ensures that the admission criteria for the Swiss University of Applied Science within the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (HEdA), ch. 4, art. 25 are respected and clearly communicated. In particular, CRCS expects its applicants to have one year of professional experience in a related profession.

As confirmed through the SAR, CRCS will continue the implementation of the action plans towards alignment with the HEdA expectations regarding the criteria for admission, should HES accreditation be achieved. The college will ensure that, as the transition is completed, the criteria will be communicated to all relevant audiences and implemented consistently.

7. Condition 7 (re Standard 4.3): CRCS establishes a concept for the promotion and career development of junior faculty and ensures that it is communicated effectively.

The college will revisit its current arrangements in terms of professional development (including contractual obligations) and career advancement and, most importantly, how these elements relate to each other and are communicated effectively to our academic community in order to create a supportive and nurturing environment that allows each faculty member to excel in their roles.

8. Condition 8 (re Standards 5.1 and 5.2): CRCS finalizes and implements its communication strategy (internal and external) and ensures that the information it provides is transparent, complete, well-structured, and honest.



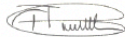
CRCS will finalise and formally adopt the Communications Strategy 2023 as, in parallel, proceeds to its implementation; we will periodically audit the internal and external communication to ensure that the published information continues to be user-friendly, accessible and complete.

Both the group of experts and AAQ recommend allowing CRCS a period of 36 months to fulfill the conditions. CRCS recognizes the importance of planning an adequate window of time to ensure implementation of the various plans of actions listed above. While many of those plans indicate a two-year roadmap, CRCS agrees with (and appreciates) a three-year timeframe that would be concluded by a follow-up visit on-site.

The CRCS team reaffirms its commitment and engagement towards taking the conditions and recommendations included in the institutional accreditation report very seriously. Recognizing that accreditation is a process of continuous improvement, we have already appreciated the value of preparing for our recent external review as an important aid in identifying both areas of strength and challenge. Including elements identified by the group of experts in our strategic planning process and implementation tactics moving forward, will help us to continue to improve and meet the needs of our students, staff, community and other stakeholders.

We remain at your disposal should you require further clarification

With appreciation,



Tanja Florenthal
Dean, César Ritz Colleges Switzerland

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