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# ENQA AGENCY REVIEW: NATIONAL AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION OF SPAIN (ANECA)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses the compliance of the **The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación) (ANECA)** with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG, 2015). It is based on an external review conducted from February 2017, when the SAR was submitted, to August 2017, when the review report was finalised. This is a report on ANECA's third review; the agency underwent external reviews previously in 2007 and 2012 and was granted full membership of ENQA in 2007, with renewal in 2012. The agency has been listed in the EQAR for the second time from 2013, following initial registration in 2008. The process adopted in this review followed the revised ENQA Guidelines for Agency Reviews.

The analysis of the self-assessment report and of the agency website, together with the interviews held during the site visit to the agency in June 2017, have evidenced the way in which ANECA has amended its processes and procedures responding to the ESG 2015 and also the status of the implementation of the recommendations for improvement from the previous ENQA evaluation. The evidence considered by the panel covered the period 2012–2017, thus the panel was facilitated in considering how the agency adapted its processes and procedures in response to the ESG 2015.

The panel has noted and commended the significant progress the agency has made since the 2012 review, together with the considerable effort made by the agency towards implementation of recommendations requiring legislative modifications.

The panel commends ANECA for its positive approach to implementing the revised ESG and the incorporation of amended criteria into the processes and procedures of the agency. The agency is well funded based on its level of activity each year and in line with its annual operational plans. The agency is well supported by the higher education institutions and the relevant ministry of government and interacts very well with all stakeholders – both internal and external. Based on the documentary evidence submitted in advance of the site visit and the findings of the panel during the site visit the panel finds the agency to be fully compliant with all the standards except for ESG 2.6 and ESG 3.4, where the panel finds the agency to be substantially compliant.

QA is a continuous process and there is always room for improvement, the panel offers a number of recommendations for further improvement, even where the panel finds the agency to be fully compliant with the ESG and while commending the high quality of the agency's activities currently. The panel recognises that the agency is required by legislation to implement its present procedures in relation to programme approval and accreditation, but is recommending that the agency consider ways of moving towards a formal audit system at institutional level, in line with practice in many European institutions and thus potentially reducing the burden on institutions.

# INTRODUCTION

This review was commissioned by ENQA in order to ascertain the compliance of **The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain** (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación), (ANECA), with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015* (ESG 2015). It is based on an external review conducted from February 2017 – August 2017. ANECA had previously undergone two external reviews – once in 2007 and the second in 2012. Following both reviews, detailed reports had been prepared and published and, following consideration of the reports, the Agency had been granted membership of ENQA. According to ENQA's statutes, all members of ENQA must undergo an external review at least once every five years and this report is the result of the most recent review conducted in 2017 in compliance with this requirement.

## BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

### BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA's regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in substantial compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference on the Bologna Process in 2015. This report is written for ENQA who retains ownership of the present report. Should ANECA wish to re-apply to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education, the report will serve for this purpose as well.

As this is ANECA's third review, the panel examines and provides analysis of clear evidence of results in all areas and acknowledges progress from the previous two reviews. The panel has adopted a developmental approach, as ENQA, as stated in the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews*, aims at constant enhancement of the agencies reviewed.

### MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2012 REVIEW

The previous evaluation of ANECA in 2012 provided a clear description of the agency and its status together with an assessment of its level of fulfilment of the ESG 2005 criteria. The review panel recognised the *effectiveness of ANECA in coordinating the overall external quality assurance processes and development in Spain, a country where regional authorities and agencies have significant levels of authority regarding higher education policy*. The review report indicated that the panel had some concerns with the level of compliance with a number of the ESG standards, i.e. the panel found the agency to be substantially compliant with ESG 3.1, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.8 and partially compliant with ESG 3.7. At the completion of its review in 2012 the panel concluded that ANECA was fully compliant with all areas of the ESG 2005, except:

#### ESG 3.1: substantial compliance

ESG 3.1 consists of ESG part 2 and detailed comments from the 2012 report are summarised below.

- **2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures: substantial compliance**  
*AUDIT and DOCENTIA are both voluntary programmes. Thus, ANECA has no means to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance systems across the*

higher education sector in Spain.

The ACREDITA programme, still in development, aims at evaluating the delivery of a study programme within the university and as such can assess the programme within context of the quality assurance system of its university.

- **2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes: substantial compliance**

ANECA does involve external stakeholders in the development of their processes however this involvement is not done systematically. ANECA could make better use of its Advisory Board.

- **2.3 Criteria for decisions: substantial compliance**

ANECA should consider the publication of more explicit documentation that explains the criteria and procedures for decision making in the assessment committees, and which distinguishes clearly between the levels of advising (peer review) and formal decision making (ANECA).

- **2.4 Processes fit for Purpose: partial compliance**

Very few international experts currently participate in ANECA's work or are members of its committees. ANECA pointed to language difficulties as a barrier to such involvement.

ANECA's processes at the level of the study programme would appear to be mainly characterised by a concern with approval of programme structures and content, and therefore primarily with confirmation and quality control, rather than supporting improvement and enhancement.

- **2.5 Reporting: partial compliance**

Published reports should be more specific and contain more information on the criteria, the framework of the procedure, the evidence considered, the considerations of the assessment committees and the reasons for the recommendations.

- **2.6 Follow-up Procedures: substantial compliance**

Viewed overall, the MONITOR programme can be considered as a predetermined follow-up procedure, which therefore meets the ESG standard in formal terms. But it does not provide for any shorter-term response or action plan from the institution that could lead to development and enhancement. In its ongoing development, and particularly with the introduction of the ACREDITA programme, ANECA should consider how further to develop its work in such a way as to establish a deeper level of dialogue with universities, thus supporting the ongoing quality enhancement of institutions' study programmes.

- **2.8 System-wide analysis: partial compliance**

In its self-evaluation report ANECA identified its annual activities report submitted to the Ministry and the University Council as the vehicle which provides a system-wide analysis of its activities. Apart from these annual reports, required by law, there are also reports on the current state of external quality assurance in Spanish universities. These reports are established in collaboration with the regional agencies and can be described as a summary report of the activities of all the agencies in Spain. ANECA also produces so called "technical

reports”, which analyse the outcomes of assessments of programmes in a specific field, and internal meta-evaluation reports. All of these reports are predominantly descriptive in nature, outlining activities undertaken. The establishment and publication of more analytical reports would provide useful information about cross-sector developments and areas of difficulty, and as such can become a very important instrument for the quality enhancement work of the Agency as well as that in Higher Education Institutions.

- **3.5 Mission Statement: Substantial compliance**

*The panel considers that the mission statement is limited, focusing primarily on ANECA’s duties and functions rather than on its values and purposes. The panel considers that ANECA should develop from its mission a more explicit medium term strategic plan, from which an action plan is then derived.*

- **3.6 Independence: Substantial compliance**

*The review panel acknowledged those amendments to the statutes which had been made in 2011, especially the new arrangements for the appointment of students and external stakeholders (cf. chapter 5.3.3, p 10). The panel found that the Minister remains as Chair, and the Minister continues to have a role, directly or indirectly, in the appointment of many of the members of the Board. The panel recognises the existing legal constraints that affect ANECA, and it also acknowledges the developments that have been made in the past five years – most importantly through the revision of the statutes in 2011.*

*Regarding the question of the internal independence of ANECA the panel is confident that the various committees and experts operating in the context of ANECA are independent in their work.*

*The panel is convinced that the results of the Agency’s assessments cannot be influenced by third parties. The panel found no evidence of any kind of political influence on the assessments in general or on the decisions of assessment committees.*

- **3.7 external quality assurance criteria and processes used by agencies: partial compliance**

*Predefined and published procedures are well-established; ANECA’s quality assurance programmes are in many respects fit for purpose, but by virtue of their variety and different aims they do not fit easily into the model expected by the ESG standard; there is level of compliance with that model in some, but not all, of the work carried out by ANECA.*

- **3.8 Accountability: substantial compliance**

*The review panel was able to confirm that internal quality assurance mechanisms are in place but it found that these differ in range and practice between the units, and that outcomes are not shared in a structural way. A formalised exchange of good practice across the Agency does not seem to exist, nor does there seem to be other forms of regular co-operation between the units.*

*The review panel considered that stakeholders, especially students, need to be more involved in the quality improvement and the development the Agency’s programmes.*

## REVIEW PROCESS

The 2017 external review of ANECA was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the external review of ANECA was appointed by ENQA and composed of:

- **Jon Haakstad** (Chair, quality assurance professional (ENQA nominee))  
Senior adviser, Department of Analysis  
Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)  
Norway
- **Norma Ryan** (Secretary, quality assurance professional (EUA nominee))  
Independent consultant  
Former Director of Quality Promotion Unit, University College Cork (UCC)  
Ireland
- **Hildegard Vermeiren** (Academic (ENQA nominee))  
Lecturer at the Faculty of Arts, Department of Translation, Interpretation and Communication  
Ghent University (UGent)  
Belgium
- **Samin Sedghi Zadeh** (Student (ESU nominee))  
Student at Faculty of Medicine and Surgery  
University of Turin  
Italy

A preparatory telephone briefing was organised between the review panel and the ENQA review coordinator, Ms. Agnė Grajauskienė, to discuss the entire review process, and more specifically the: purpose of the review, roles and responsibilities of panel members, use and understanding of the ESG 2015 and judgment of compliance, link between evidence and information, analysis, and conclusions in the review report, timeline and management of the site visit, drafting of the report; and submission of the final review report and the decision-making process.

The panel was in regular contact both prior to and subsequent to the site visit, permanently supported by the ENQA review coordinator. The panel worked on the basis of consensus and both prior to, during and subsequent to the site visit, full discussions took place and agreement was reached on topics, questions, areas to be interrogated in depth and on the conclusions reached as detailed in the final report submitted to ENQA. The panel was facilitated in its work by the simultaneous translation of all meetings and discussions, which ensured an accurate understanding of the conversations by all involved.

### Self-assessment report

ANECA commenced its preparation for the review in May 2016, establishing leaders for the process within the agency and conducting an in-depth internal reflection aimed at establishing a clear overall perspective of the agency's current position regarding European criteria. In its preparation, the agency focussed particularly on identification of its strengths and areas for improvement.



The agency expressed its view that the conduct of this self-assessment process in advance of any external visit has contributed to enhancing the processes developed by the agency's units and to greater compliance with the new ESG. To complete the self-assessment report (SAR) report, appropriate methodology was put in place to evaluate and contextualise the level of alignment of the activities of ANECA with ENQA requirements. ANECA took into consideration the recommendations made by the ENQA external assessment committee during its visit to the agency in 2012, and the interpretation of the EQAR ESG established in the 'Guide for applicants and registered agencies'.

As agreed in the Terms of Reference (TOR) with ENQA and EQAR for this review (Annex 3), the scope of the self-assessment process focused mainly on the programme and institutional evaluation procedures: **VERIFICA, MONITOR, ACREDITA, ACREDITA PLUS, DOCENTIA** and **AUDIT**.

The work of the review panel was facilitated by the placement of all relevant documentation by the review coordinator on a google drive and making them available to members of the panel on line. The agency had inserted many active links to relevant supporting documentation in the SAR and this proved very helpful in the perusal and consideration of the documentation in advance of the site visit.

The SAR provided an overview of the system of higher education in Spain, including in the regions, and on the system of quality assurance in higher education in Spain. The structure and modus operandi of the agency were explained and the SAR also considered the extent to which, in the opinion of ANECA, ANECA adheres to each ESG standard. The last part of the SAR included a SWOT analysis, where ANECA reflected on its strong points and its weak points, which need further improvement. Further comment on this analysis will be given later in this report.

### **Site visit**

The panel conducted a site visit to fully validate the self-evaluation and clarify any points at issue. The site visit took place on 6-9 June 2017 in Madrid with a final preparatory meeting the day before on 5 June 2017. The members discussed the programme of the visit and initial lines of questioning were distributed among panel members. During the site visit, the panel was facilitated in meeting with representatives of various stakeholder groups, including the Head of the agency, the Self-Evaluation (SE) working group, staff members, heads of higher education institutions, higher education institutions' quality coordinators, students, government and ministries representatives, ANECA's evaluation partners, experts, etc.

The review panel considers that the three-day site-visit provided relevant information to support the external review and wishes to thank ANECA for the smooth organisation of the site visit.

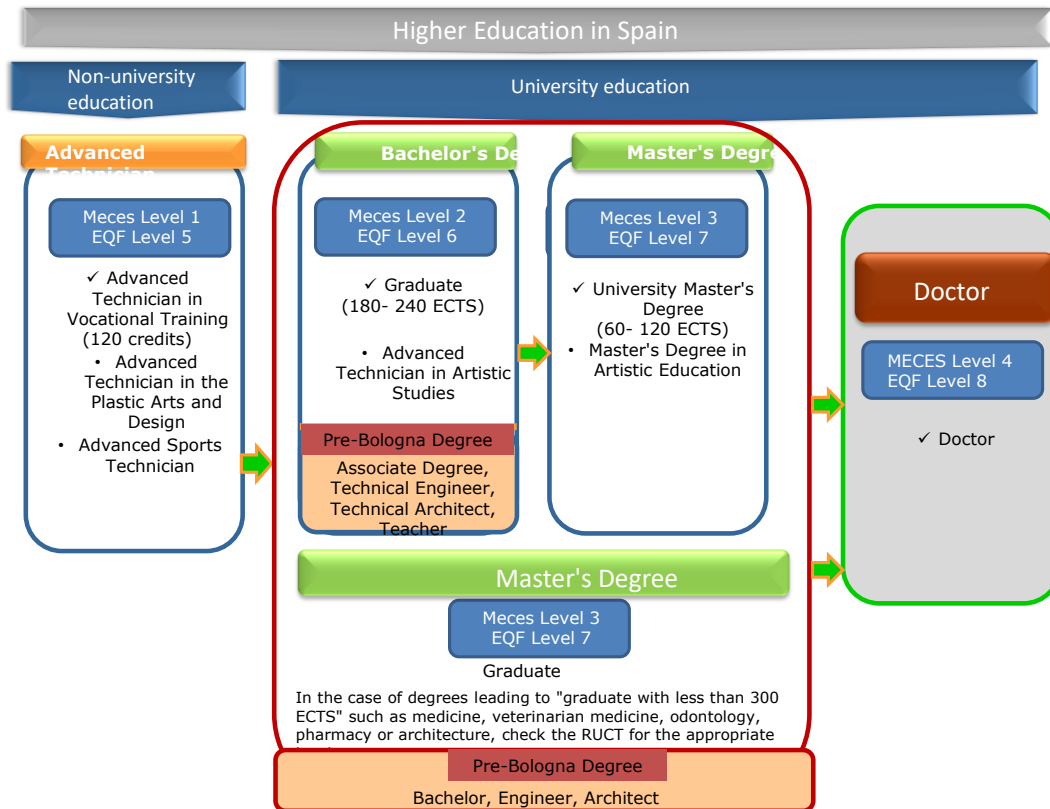
## **HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE AGENCY**

### **HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The higher education system in Spain is governed by legislation (Organic Law 6/2001, on universities (LOMLOU)) including the Acts and Royal Decrees that modify and develop it. Spain's educational model is a decentralised organisation that distributes competences between the State, the regional governments and universities. The State is responsible for guarantying the homogeneity and coherence of the educational system across Spain. The regional governments are responsible for the creation, modification and removal of educational courses, both at public and private universities, and

for the basic funding of public universities. The following figure, taken from the SAR<sup>1</sup>, summarises higher education in Spain, encompassing, university education, advanced vocational training (FP) and special regime education.

**Figure1: Higher Education in Spain**



At present, there are 84 universities in Spain (of which 82 offer degree courses), 50 public universities (of which 48 depend on Regional Governments and 2 depend on the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports) and 34 private and Church-owned universities (Table 1<sup>2</sup>).

**Table 1: Evolution of the number of universities per type of funding**

| Modality             | 1985      | 2005      | 2012      | 2015      |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Public universities  | 30        | 50        | 50        | 50        |
| Private universities | 4         | 23        | 29        | 34        |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>34</b> | <b>73</b> | <b>79</b> | <b>84</b> |

<sup>1</sup> SAR Page 6

<sup>2</sup> SAR Page 8

In the academic year 2014-2015 more than 1.5 million students were enrolled (1,529,730), of which 1,361,340 were students studying for a Bachelor's Degree; 139,844 for a Master's Degree, and 28,546 studying in doctoral programmes. During 2014-2015, private universities attracted 12% of students studying for a Bachelor's Degree.

Details of the overall number of academic, administrative and services staff at universities are displayed in Table 2<sup>3</sup>.

**Table 2: Teaching staff and administrative and services staff (PAS) at universities. Academic year 2014-2015**

| University         | Teaching staff | P.A.S.        |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Public</b>      |                |               |
| Civil servants     | 45.839         | 31.464        |
| Non-civil servants | 47.988         | 19.478        |
| <b>Private</b>     | 14.900         | 7.561         |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>115.366</b> | <b>58.799</b> |

With respect to accredited and implemented degrees, for the academic year 2014-2015, the entire Spanish University System totalled 2,637 Bachelor's Degrees, 3,661 Master's Degrees and 1,035 Doctoral Degrees. Of these, public universities delivered 610 Bachelor's Degrees, 709 Master's Degrees and 69 Doctoral Degrees (see Table 3<sup>4</sup>).

#### QUALITY ASSURANCE

The situation re external quality assurance in Spain is complex with delivery through Spain's 11 Quality Agencies, eight of which are full members of ENQA<sup>5</sup>. A further three Regional Governments have their own Quality Agencies despite lacking full membership of ENQA or EQAR<sup>6</sup>.

ANECA is responsible for evaluation procedures for education programmes<sup>7</sup> and for institutions<sup>8</sup>. The evaluation procedure for internal quality assurance systems (**AUDIT**) is assessed by the agency for all

<sup>3</sup> SAR, page 8

<sup>4</sup> SAR page 8

<sup>5</sup> Eight Spanish QA agencies which are full members of ENQA: ANECA, AQU-Catalunya in Catalonia, ACSUG in Galicia, ACSUCYL in Castilla y León, AAC-DEVA in Andalusia, UNIBASQ in the Basque Country, FM+D in Madrid and ACPUA in Aragón

<sup>6</sup> AQUIB in the Balearic Isles, ACCUEE in the Canary Isles and AVAP in the region of Valencia

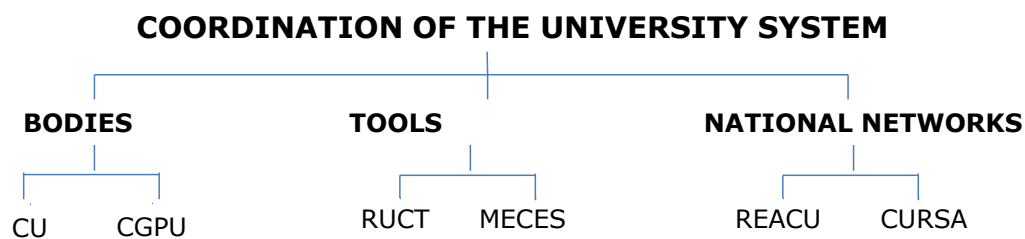
<sup>7</sup> Evaluation procedures for education programmes: ANECA has exclusive competence over degrees in the Regional Governments that do not have a Quality Agency of their own (La Rioja, Cantabria, Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Navarra and Murcia). ANECA shares evaluation competences with the Regional Evaluation Agencies for university education (ex-ante accreditation, follow-up and accreditation).

<sup>8</sup> Evaluation procedures for institutions: ANECA has exclusive competence over evaluation of teaching quality assessment systems (**DOCENTIA**) in regions that do not have a Quality Agency of their own (La Rioja, Cantabria, Asturias, Navarra, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura and Murcia).

Regional Governments excepting Catalonia, Galicia and Basque Country. ANECA has exclusive responsibility throughout the Spanish territory for accreditation of civil servant academic staff (**ACADEMIA**), and for the evaluation of research by university academic staff (**CNEAI**) and the scientific scale staff at the Higher Centre for Scientific Research (CSIC). The evaluation procedure for non-civil servant academic staff (**PEP**) applies throughout Spain but is not exclusively the responsibility of ANECA.

In addition, ANECA is responsible for the evaluation of universities that are dependent on the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MECD)<sup>9</sup>. A number of bodies and tools have been created to coordinate the actions and evaluation outcomes of agencies across the Spanish University System. These are shown on the diagram in Figure 2 below<sup>10</sup>.

**Figure 2: Coordination elements in the Spanish University System**



### Coordination Bodies in the Spanish University System

The **Council of Universities (CU)** exercises advisory, cooperation and coordination functions. The CU is formed by the Minister of Education, Culture and Sports, and the Rectors of public and private universities. Among other functions, current legislation grants the Council competences over decision-making in the accreditation *ex-ante* process for degrees, on the basis of the binding evaluation reports submitted by the agencies. As for the accreditation of academic staff, the Council of Universities is responsible for the appointment of members of the assessment committees designated by ANECA and for making the formal decision on accreditation of the candidate on the basis of the agency's resolution.

The **General Conference on University Policy (CGPU)** is the body responsible for arranging and coordinating the general university policy. It is made up of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and Regional Ministers responsible for higher education in the Autonomous Regions. The functions include establishing and assessing the general lines in university policy and approving the criteria for coordinating evaluation, certification and accreditation activities.

### Coordination tools in the Spanish University System

The **Register of Universities, Higher Education Faculties/Schools and Degrees (RUCT)** is the official register created to provide essential information on universities, colleges and degrees in the Spanish

<sup>9</sup> Universidad Nacional a Distancia and Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo, as well as the Universidades de la Iglesia, Universidad Pontificia Comillas and Universidad de Navarra.

<sup>10</sup> SAR Page 9

university system, in which the new official Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees are entered. In addition, the RUCT is a public administrative register, designed as an instrument that is continuously updated. In the current university planning scenario, each university, after *ex-ante* accreditation and authorisation, decides on the degrees it intends to offer (and their characteristics), in contrast with the previous planning scenario in which degrees were chosen from a closed catalogue of 134 degrees. These degrees referred to here are the *titulos oficiales*<sup>11</sup> and do not include the *titulos propios*<sup>12</sup> which universities are free to offer as they wish and which are not accredited by ANECA or the Ministry.

The ***Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (MECES)*** is a regulation and international coordination tool aimed at facilitating the grading, compatibility and transparency of higher education qualifications in the Spanish education system. The Framework is structured on four levels: non-university higher education programmes, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree and Doctoral Degrees.

### **National networks**

The Spanish Network for Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies (REACU) was founded on 9 October 2006. ANECA, and all of the regional agencies for the assessment of quality in the university system, forms part of this network. REACU was created to coordinate activities and promote collaboration among these agencies. It does not have official standing but allows compliance with the mandate stated in the regulation, which requires the agencies to establish joint assessment protocols.

The aims of REACU are:

- To promote and develop cooperation and the exchange of experience and information, especially relating to methodologies and good practices.
- To collaborate in promoting quality assurance.
- To act as a forum for proposing and developing standards, procedures and guidance for quality assurance.
- To promote the development and implementation of quality assurance and agency accreditation systems.

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<sup>11</sup> Official degrees

The Government establishes the directives and the guidelines to obtain official university degrees which are valid on a national level and are issued in the name of the King of Spain by the Vice-Chancellor of the University.

Once the corresponding syllabus has been verified by the Council of Universities and the university has been authorized by the Regional Government to offer this degree, the National Government will establish the official nature of the degree and will order its inclusion in the Register of universities, centres and degree.

Teaching and degrees are regulated through the establishment of guarantees in terms of the quality of official degrees and syllabi, with different levels of control of their adaptation to current legislation and to minimum levels of quality. Once the Law comes into force, the syllabi will be assessed after an initial period of implementation.

<sup>12</sup> Own degrees

Own degrees are limited to postgraduate studies that can be taken once students have a first bachelor's degree. They do not provide access to official postgraduate studies nor are they recognized in all of the European Union, since they do not undergo a process of verification by the corresponding quality agency.

These degrees are aimed at acquiring specific and multidisciplinary training, focused on academic or professional specialization. They are programmes designed by a University, often in collaboration with professionals and experts from different organizations, and are devised to respond effectively to the needs of the labour market and society.

The University Committee for Regulating Follow-up and Accreditation (**CURSA**) was created in 2010 to guarantee coordination in launching the evaluation processes linked to follow-up and accreditation of official degrees. The committee has representatives from the Ministry, the Regional Governments, the Quality Agencies and the universities.

The CURSA Technical Commission has representatives from the State Public Administrations (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports), Regional Public Administrations, universities, Regional Evaluation Agencies and ANECA.

The aims of the CURSA Technical Commission are:

- To agree on the guidelines and protocol for the follow-up process for degrees and *ex post* accreditation.
- To issue reports of a general or specific nature on the implementation process of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), to be submitted to the Council of Universities and the General Conference on University Policy.
- To agree on solutions to interpretation difficulties and to any conflicts arising from the procedures for accreditation follow-up and *ex post* accreditation.
- To discuss and propose any other aspects not previously considered related with follow-up, *ex post* accreditation and the implementation of the EHEA.

## NATIONAL AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION OF SPAIN (ANECA)

ANECA was established in 2002 as a State public sector foundation by Ministerial Council agreement<sup>13</sup>. Its function was to contribute to enhancing quality in the higher education system through the evaluation, certification and accreditation of education, procedures, academic staff and institutions, as well as submitting reports to the competent ministry for universities and to the Council of Universities on the performance of the evaluation processes. The agency's remit included providing information on the quality of the University System, and it was given a major role in relation to Spanish universities' stakeholders in establishing the framework for relations and advisory services with Spanish public universities' stakeholders' councils<sup>14</sup>. To date, ANECA has undergone a number of internal and external changes that have affected the institution itself. In 2015 new legislation was enacted that established ANECA as an autonomous public body.

### ANECA'S ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE 2012 - PRESENT

The governance structure of the agency, in force until 31 December 2015 (redefined between 2007 and 2012), consisted of three coordination processes depending directly on the management:

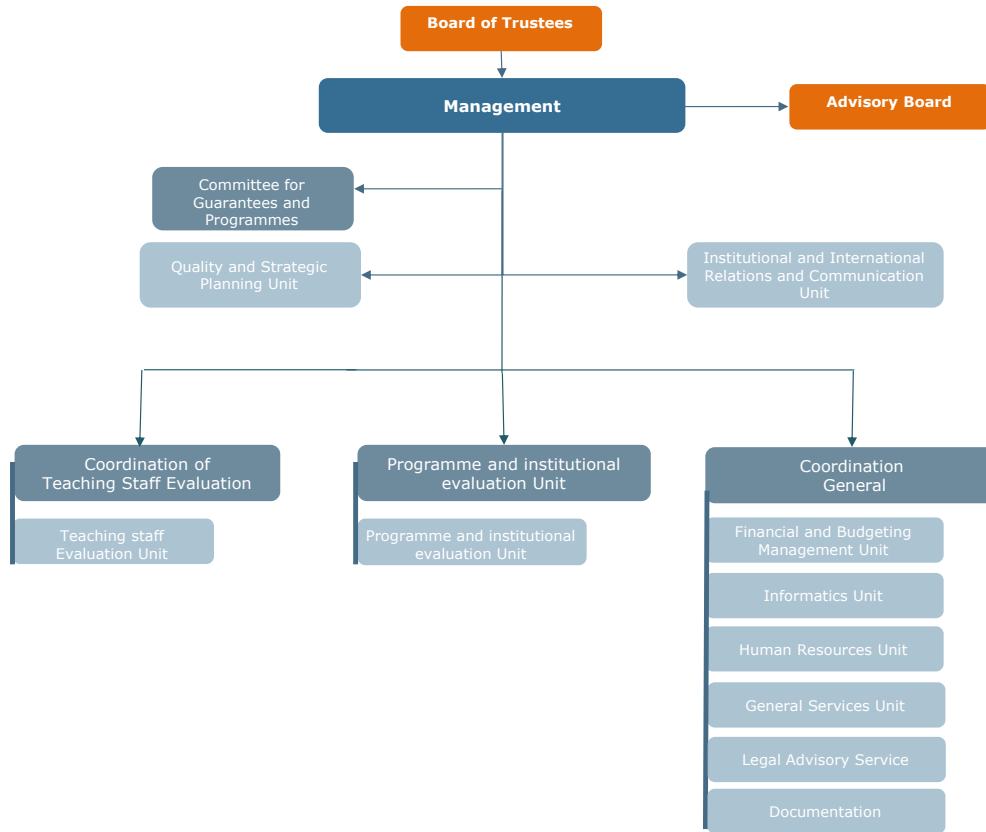
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<sup>13</sup> The Plenary Session of the Chamber of Deputies, in its session of 20 December 2001, passed, in conformity with that established in articles 81 and 90 of the Constitution, the Organic Law on Universities Bill (file number 121/000045). Publishing ordered in compliance with article 97 of the Chamber Regulations. Palace of the Chamber of Deputies, 20 December 2001. — P. S. The Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies, Piedad García-Escudero Márquez.

<sup>14</sup> Article 14.2 of the LOMLOU

teaching staff assessment, institutional and programme evaluation, and general coordination. The governance structure in place at that time is shown in the figure below.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 3: ANECA organogram 2012-2015**



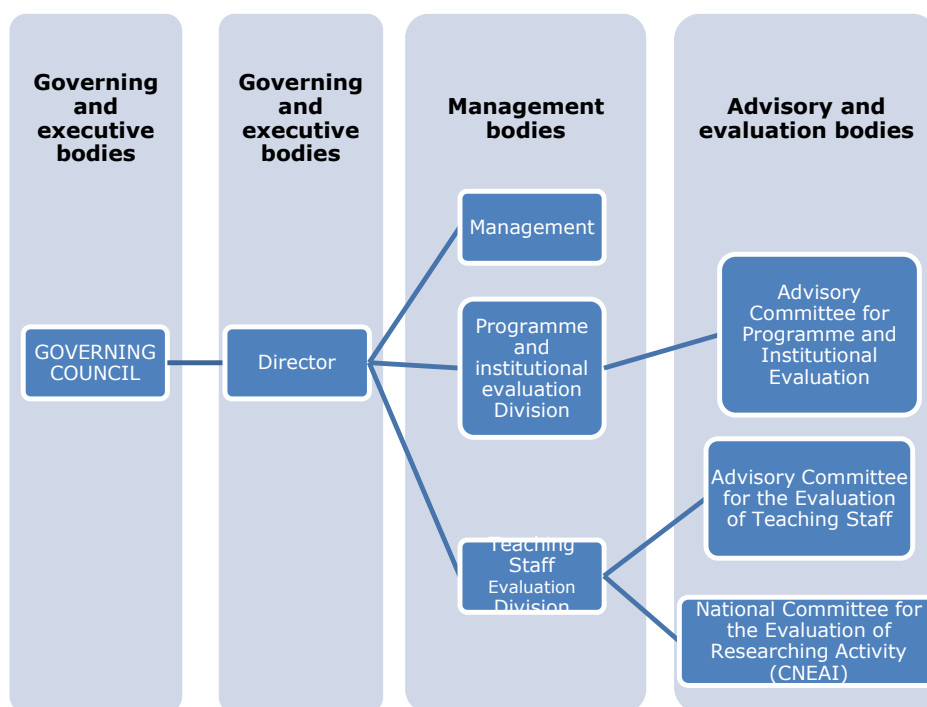
The ANECA Foundation was replaced in January 2016 by ANECA as an autonomous body<sup>16</sup>, whose aim is to contribute to enhancing quality in the higher education system in Spain through the evaluation, certification and accreditation of educational programmes, teaching staff and institutions. The most notable changes that occurred as a consequence of this change from a State foundation to a public body have affected principally the administrative procedures and management rather than the performance of the procedures, and therefore the modifications have not influenced the basic orientation of the institution nor its commitments with ENQA regarding external evaluation. Over the years, ANECA has consolidated both its team of professionals with the appropriate technical profile and a pool of experts of renowned prestige to carry out external evaluation processes. Under the new structures the procedures continue to be conducted to the same standards of effectiveness and efficiency as before. ANECA's current governance structure is diagrammed in the figure below<sup>17</sup>:

<sup>15</sup> SAR page 13

<sup>16</sup> Article 8 of Act 15/2014, 16 September

<sup>17</sup> SAR page 15

**Figure 4: ANECA organogram 2016 - present**



The **Governing Council** is the corporate governing body responsible for controlling and monitoring ANECA's activities. The Council has nine members. Participation by major stakeholders in higher education has been encouraged through appointment of representatives from different affiliated bodies: students, the Conference of the Social Bodies of Spanish Public Universities, trade unions and the national Confederation of Business Organisations, as well as a Regional Administration representative with responsibilities in university education.

The **Director** is appointed by the Governing Council and is tasked with the day-to-day management of ANECA.

The **Management Bodies** report directly to the Director of ANECA: the Management; the Division for institutional and programme evaluation; and the Division for teaching staff evaluation.

The **Advisory Councils** for institutional and programme evaluations and teaching staff evaluation are technical bodies belonging to ANECA, each with its own scope of assessment, in which academics of high standing, university students, professionals with expert knowledge in the field of higher education, and internationally renowned researchers take part. The maximum number of members on the advisory committees is 12.

The **CNEAI** is the body within ANECA responsible for the evaluation of research activity.

#### **ANECA'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES**

ANECA is responsible for a number of clearly defined evaluation procedures summarised below according to the type of evaluation carried out

- a. Procedures for programme evaluation
  - i. VERIFICA Procedure (accreditation *ex ante*)



- ii. MONITOR Procedure (follow-up on implementation)
- iii. ACREDITA Procedure (accreditation *ex post*)
- iv. ACREDITA PLUS Procedure
- b. Procedures for institutional evaluation
  - i. DOCENTIA Procedure
  - ii. AUDIT Procedure
- c. Other evaluation procedures
  - i. National activities
  - ii. International activities

### Programme Evaluation

The **VERIFICA Procedure** evaluates proposed Degree study plans (Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree and Doctorate) designed in agreement with the European Higher Education Area. All study plans (i.e. those relating to the *titulos oficiales* and not including those relevant to the *titulos propios*) before their implementation, must be submitted for an evaluation *ex-ante* to ensure, *a priori*, the coherence of the proposed course of study, and the availability of sufficient human and material resources. ANECA conducts the evaluation of the degree proposal submitted by the University and issues an *ex-ante* accreditation report, which is binding in nature, and includes, as applicable, recommendations to be analysed subsequently during follow-up. ANECA has drawn up guidelines to support universities in presenting their official degree proposals and has developed evaluation protocols to assist the assessment committees. A university may request, if necessary, the modification of a previously verified university degree. After each evaluation process is completed the agency delivers a report.

The **MONITOR Procedure** aims to provide universities with an external appraisal of the implementation of their official degrees, with a view to using this information to enhance their educational offer. The **MONITOR Procedure** aims to:

- Ensure that programmes unfold as foreseen in the degree proposal, entered in the RUCT, together with the modifications favourably received and authorised, as appropriate, by the Regional Governments.
- Ensure the public availability of any relevant information to the various stakeholders in the University System.
- Detect any possible deficiencies in the effective delivery of educational programmes, and to analyse any remedial actions taken.
- Make recommendations and/or suggestions for improvement during the implementation stages of the study plan.
- Identify good practices for their dissemination across the University System framework.

The **ACREDITA Procedure** performs an evaluation of the official university degrees in order to verify that, following implementation, they are being delivered as initially proposed.

Specifically, the general objectives of the **ACREDITA Procedure** are:

- To assure the quality of the programme offered as per the criteria expressed in the legal regulations currently in force.

- To guarantee that the degree is delivered according to the latest accredited version of the degree proposal, that it is provided with the appropriate resources and supported by an internal quality assurance system that enables reflection and effective improvements to be incorporated in the degree.
- To guarantee that the degree has undergone the appropriate follow-up process, both internal and external, and that the available quantitative and qualitative information has been used to analyse its performance and to generate pertinent proposals for improvement.
- To ensure the availability and accessibility of any public, valid, dependable, pertinent and relevant information that may be useful to users' and agents' decision-making or of interest to the university system.
- To provide recommendations and/or suggestions for improving the degree that support the internal processes for enhancing the quality of the educational programme and its delivery.

The main objective of the new **ACREDITA PLUS Procedure** is to obtain *ex post* accreditation for the degrees offered in certain disciplines and an opportunity to obtain a European or international label, benefiting from the synergies between the two evaluation procedures. ANECA launched the ACREDITA PLUS Procedure jointly with two professional bodies, the Spanish Institute of Engineering (IIE) and the IT Engineering Colleges (CCII and CONCITI), in their corresponding areas of knowledge:

- Engineering: the EUR-ACE label is a certificate awarded to a university by an Agency authorised by the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAE), in relation to a degree in engineering at the Bachelor's or Master's level, evaluated according to a series of defined standards, and compliant with the principles of quality, relevance, transparency, recognition and mobility established within the European Higher Education Area.
- Information Technology: the EURO-INF label is a certificate awarded to a university in relation to a degree in IT at the Bachelor's or Master's level, evaluated according to a series of defined standards, and compliant with the principles of quality, relevance, transparency, recognition and mobility established within the European Higher Education Area.

In addition, ANECA is authorised by the European Chemistry Thematic Network (ECTN) to evaluate and award the labels EUROBACHELOR and EUROMASTER in the field of chemistry, although no degrees have been evaluated to date.

#### Institutional Evaluation

The **DOCENTIA Procedure** is aimed at supporting universities in designing their own quality management systems for university teaching staff activity and to boost development and recognition of teaching. To date, more than 90% of Spanish universities have participated in this procedure.

The **AUDIT Procedure** has been developed by ANECA, in collaboration with other regional agencies, in order to favour and strengthen the development and implementation of formally established and publicly available policies and IQAS at universities. This initiative seeks to facilitate guidance to university faculties in the design of their IQAS. ANECA has developed a procedure for certifying and implementing these designs.

## National Activities

Agreements of collaboration are signed, both with higher education institutions and with government bodies, on topics related to the evaluation of educational provision, teaching staff and institutions, for the conduct of a range of activities involving evaluation at the behest of the institution or body concerned. The duration and establishment of these agreements is not a regular or systematic activity for the agency. The activities conducted under these agreements are included within the three major evaluation fields covered by the agency. This implies that said activities are conducted in compliance with the ESG in the design of the procedure, the screening and use of experts and their reports, and the results may always be appealed.

Table 3<sup>18</sup> displays the main evaluation activities conducted by ANECA through collaboration agreements with a variety of institutions and national bodies.

**Table 3: National evaluation activities conducted by ANECA under contract**

|                               |  | PROGRAMMES   | INSTITUTIONS  | TEACHING STAFF  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Higher Education Institutions | <a href="#">Open University (UNED)</a>                       |  | Collaboration with the Quality Chair at the UNED "Ciudad de Tudela" |   |
|                               | <a href="#">Universidad de Granada</a>                       |  |   | Evaluation of applications for projects involving innovation and good teaching practices.         |
|                               | <a href="#">Universidad de Extremadura</a>                   |  |   | Assessment of individual teaching and researching merit among the teaching and researching staff. |
| Government Bodies             | <a href="#">The Accounting and Auditing Institute (ICAC)</a> | Approval of auditor training courses delivered by universities as unofficial degrees.  |   |   |
|                               | <a href="#">Ministry of Defence</a>                          | Support to evaluation processes for military education and to the dissemination of the |   |   |

<sup>18</sup> SAR Page 21

|  |   |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|
|  |   | culture of quality throughout the colleges in all three services of the armed forces.                          |  |  |
|  | <a href="#">Ministry of Justice</a>           | Evaluation of course of study for admission to the profession of lawyer.                                       |  |  |
|  | <a href="#">Regional Government of Murcia</a> | Development of the MONITOR PLUS Procedure and other activities involving counselling, training and evaluation. |  |  |

### International Activities

ANECA conducts various international activities worldwide which range from capacity building initiatives, cooperation with fellow QA bodies on technical and methodological issues and participation in European Commission funded projects from the Erasmus Plus framework (as well as the previous calls from DG Education and DG RELEX such as Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, ALFA, etc.). ANECA aims to deliver initiatives and projects that could involve the implementation of evaluation procedures adapted from ANECA's ones, within the scope of international cooperation, with bodies in charge of QA in the regions where the agency is active. These activities are governed by a bilateral collaboration agreement with an agency or similar body on a not-for-profit basis: ANECA provides the expertise and the other institution finances the project. In such projects ANECA has responded to a request from an official body to provide technical support and training to adapt QA procedures to the national context, with the contribution of local experts and in accordance with the relevant national legal framework. The agreement is followed by a pilot project with institutions opting in on a voluntary basis to test the procedure and to build capacity within the national body which cooperates in the process, followed by a second phase focusing on the evaluation of the implementation of the certified design of the first phase.

The following Table summarises the international activities engaged in by ANECA to date.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> SAR page 24

**Table 4: International evaluation activities conducted by ANECA by collaboration agreement.**

| CROSS-BORDER ACTIVITIES       |   | EDUCATIONAL CONTENT  | INSTITUTIONS   | DOCUMENTATION   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Higher Education Institutions | <a href="#">Universidad TACNA (PERU)</a><br><a href="#">Universidad Continental (PERU)</a>  |  | Training in Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) and the AUDIT INTERNACIONAL model.<br><br>Certification of the design and implementation of IQAS. | <a href="#">AUDIT-Peru documents</a>  |
|                               | <a href="#">Universidad del Istmo (GUATEMALA)</a>   |  |  | <a href="#">Guatemala documents</a>   |
|                               | <a href="#">National Polytechnic University of Armenia (UNPA)</a><br><a href="#">National University of Architecture of Armenia (UNACA)</a> |  | Definition of a procedure for institutional accreditation approved for the Armenian case.  | <a href="http://www.aneca.es/Actividad-internacional/Proyectos-internacionales/Proyectos-en-el-EEES/Proyecto-bilateral-con-HCERES-Francia">http://www.aneca.es/Actividad-internacional/Proyectos-internacionales/Proyectos-en-el-EEES/Proyecto-bilateral-con-HCERES-Francia</a><br><br><a href="#">Armenian documents</a> |
|                               | <a href="#">EURACE-MÉXICO (Agreement with the Engineering Education Accreditation Board of Mexico-CACEI)</a>                                | Pilot project to obtain the EUR-ACE label in Mexican universities. |  | <a href="#">EUR-ACE-MEXICO documents</a>  |
| Civil associations            | <a href="#">EURACE-MÉXICO (Agreement with the Engineering Education Accreditation Board of Mexico-CACEI)</a>                                | Pilot project to obtain the EUR-ACE label in Mexican universities. |  | <a href="#">EUR-ACE-MEXICO documents</a>  |

#### ANECA'S FUNDING

ANECA is a public body funded by the Government. Up to December 2015 ANECA's financial regime as a Foundation was determined as provided for in chapter IV of the corresponding Statutes. Since 1 January 2016, the financial regime of ANECA as an autonomous public body is governed by RD 1112/2015, of 11 December. The economic resources generated originate fundamentally from current and capital transfers from public administrations or bodies and are adequate and appropriate for the activities of the agency. Other sources of funding are: revenue deriving from international agreements, contracts for evaluation on demand, or other commissions by public or private entities. These funds are used to fund the projects engaged in by the agency for which the funds were received.

As an autonomous body ANECA is empowered to distribute its budget among its different units. In the Annual Operational Plan the agency's budget is allocated by government to each of its evaluation activities.

# FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF ANECA WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG)

## ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

### ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

**Standard:**

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

#### **2012 review recommendation**

*ANECA should develop a clear medium term strategic plan deriving from its mission statement; this should include a risk analysis, and form the basis for the annual action plan.*

#### **Evidence**

ANECA's activities are established in legislation, in the LOMLOU (articles 31 and 32) and in the regulation developing said law, as well as in Act 15/2014 and in ANECA's Statutes which state that the agency will perform the activities of evaluation, certification and accreditation of programmes, institutions and teaching staff.

In the SAR, the agency describes in detail its responsibilities, activities and outcomes. The agency's mission (published on the agency web site together with the strategic plan) is *to promote and assure quality in the Spanish higher education system by means of processes for guidance, evaluation, certification and accreditation, thus contributing to the development of the European Higher Education Area, and to contribute to raising the level of information and transparency toward society, as provided for in articles 31 and 32 of Organic Law 6/2001, of 21 December, and any other applicable legislation.* This mission is delivered through the development of a Strategic Plan for the agency with associated annual operational plans developed from identification of strategic targets to be met every year. The development of the strategic plan and the operational targets is carried out in close consultation with all key stakeholders (students, staff of institutions, government, external stakeholders, including representatives of all facets of society). As evidenced in the documents provided and in the discussions with the agency and its stakeholders there is a clear orientation within the agency towards providing a service to society in the development of and recognition as a reference for good practices in quality assurance in higher education systems, in Spain and abroad.

ANECA is responsible for

- Guidance, evaluation, certification and accreditation within the Spanish higher education system.

- Conducting, editing and disseminating studies and surveys regarding guidance, evaluation, certification and accreditation of Spanish universities.
- The promotion, evaluation and certification of internal quality assurance systems at universities and their faculties.

These functions are defined in the targets established in ANECA's Strategic Plan, in the Annual Operational Plans and in the strategic targets identified arising from the objectives and aims identified in the Strategic Plan. In addition, an Annual Report published by the agency, provides information on progress made in the implementation of the plan. The annual budget is aligned with the Operational Plan and so the agency is assured of adequate resources to deliver on its plan.

All categories of stakeholders are involved at all levels in the development of the strategic plan, the annual operational plan and in the annual report that follows completion of the yearly activities. This is evidenced not only in the documentation provided by the agency to the review panel but also was confirmed during the discussions held with stakeholder groups during the site visit. All groups expressed satisfaction with both the aims and objectives of the agency in addition to its actual activities. The involvement of representatives of all key stakeholders (representatives of the central and regional administrations, students, teachers' unions, business organisations, employers, international experts, national and international academics and professional associations) is also evident in the membership of the agency's decision-making bodies and in the committees taking part in the various evaluation procedures and activities.

Over time, stakeholders have formed part of the main decision-making body within ANECA, now named the Governing Council. Students are represented on two new bodies: the advisory committees, responsible for oversight of both the evaluation of programmes and institutions and the evaluation of teaching staff. Participation by all stakeholders is essential in the agency's meta-evaluation activities as well as in developing a number of international projects.

All documents mentioned above, including all evaluation procedures, reports, decisions of the agency are published on the agency web site, [www.aneca.es](http://www.aneca.es). The agency also publishes analysis of data collected during its proceedings. The agency conducts all of its activities in full accordance with and respecting the values that can be found in the Ethics Code: independence, fairness, transparency, confidentiality, involvement, integrity, objectivity, consistency, personal involvement and respect for diversity.

### **Analysis**

The review panel found that the goals and objectives of ANECA are clear, transparent and published on the agency web site. The web site is a comprehensive repository of the agency's policies and procedures and reports. It is very well constructed and available in both Spanish and English. A search facility allows the enquirer to find quickly and easily a specific document, if required, for example a report on the accreditation status of a particular programme. The documents provided and the discussions that took place during meetings with the different stakeholders enabled the panel to conclude that the agency is in compliance with this standard and that the agency has worked continuously, since the 2012 review, to improve the quality and focus of all its activities, including the evaluation of programmes and institutions, the involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders in its activities, the follow-up procedures, the expansion of updated guidelines aimed at helping the

implementation of the reference framework, the strategic plan 2013-2016 (extended to 2017), the annual operational plans and the annual reports. Students are involved in all evaluation panels as full members, and the agency makes all efforts possible to ensure the engagement of students in all activities. All documents and analyses conducted are publicly available and published in an easily accessible form.

The focus of the agency's international activities, aimed at supporting national bodies in development/enhancement of quality assurance in higher education, was deemed appropriate by the panel. The panel was afforded the opportunity to meet some of those involved in the international projects and was impressed by the respect in which the agency is held and the positive attitude of the project leaders/participants towards the agency and its activities.

The panel found the agency to be successful in implementing changes and improvements to its procedures and activities. Both the staff of the agency and the external stakeholders were very positive and supportive of the approach of continuous review and improvement of all activities. The outcomes of the programme evaluations and of academic staff evaluations are an important part of the quality assurance system in Spain. In addition, the panel found that ANECA works cooperatively with the regional QA bodies in Spain to ensure a common approach across the country.

The panel considers that the external quality assurance activities of the agency take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the ESG and that ANECA complies fully with all standards from Part 2 of the ESG. A more detailed discussion of how the Agency complies with the Standards in Part 2 of the ESG is provided in the section of this report dealing with consideration of Part 2 of the ESG.

### **Panel Commendations**

The panel commends the agency on its willingness and ability to deliver change and improvements to its processes and procedures, in particular following the previous two external reviews and consideration of the outcomes of feedback following its activities.

**Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

### **ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS**

Standard:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

### **Evidence**

The Spanish Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) is an autonomous public body created by virtue of *article 8 of Act 15/2014, of 16 September, 2014*, on the rationalisation of the public sector and other measures of administrative reform, stemming from the transformation of the Foundation ANECA into a public body. ANECA's aim is to contribute to enhancing quality in the higher education system through the evaluation, certification and accreditation of educational content



teaching staff and institutions (*articles 31 and 32 of Organic Law 6/2001, of 21 December, on Universities*). Its Statute was approved by *Royal Decree 1112/2015*, of 11 December 2015.

### **Analysis**

The panel found that ANECA is a formally recognised professional body established by law. The decisions of the agency on evaluations of programmes and of teaching staff are made independently, following the procedures detailed in the guidelines and documents of the agency, and are binding. The representatives of the higher education institutions interviewed by the panel were very supportive of this role of ANECA and, in addition, of the purpose of the agency in assisting the universities to develop an enhanced internal quality culture.

**Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

### **ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE**

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

#### **2012 review recommendations**

*ANECA should reconsider the composition of the Board of Trustees with regard to ensuring both an appropriate level of independence and the representation of all stakeholders.*

*It is again recommended that the appointment of a Chair of the Board of Trustees independent of the Ministry would support the expected level of autonomous responsibility.*

*ANECA should ensure that the student representatives in the Board of Trustees are appointed by a representative body that has no formal or de facto external political involvement.*

#### **Evidence**

Following the evaluation of ANECA in 2012, the agency's Management Board launched a process of reflection on the recommendations made by the evaluation panel and, in particular, on how to strengthen its independence. As a consequence of this analysis, the agency began to design structural changes to bolster its independence. This process led to the transformation of ANECA, in 2016, into an autonomous body assigned to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports. This change was intended to endow the institution with greater independence on three fronts:

- *Organisational independence*
  - *A guarantee of functional independence as expressed in the new Statutes of the agency.*
- *Operational independence*
  - *.... neither its staff nor the members of ANECA's bodies may accept, nor request, in the fulfilment of their functions, instructions from any public or private entity*

- *Independence of results.*
  - *Principle of independence of action, criterion, opinion and judgement in the conduct of its activities, thereby guaranteeing that its functions are fulfilled in accordance with technical-scientific and management criteria, pre-established and public, with full impartiality.*

### Organisational Independence

The agency's organisational independence is strengthened by the system for appointing its director, through a governing council, a body pertaining to ANECA, for a period of three years which may be extended up to a maximum of a further three years. The Director has responsibility for the design and approval of the evaluation procedures, following the guidance provided by the pertinent advisory bodies, the strategic plan, the action plans and the legislation currently in force. The above documents underscore the independent nature of ANECA and guide the Agency's tasks, while enhancing its transparency and accountability.

In the past year the Governing Body has been created, replacing the former Board of Trustees, with the aim of giving more transparent independence by:

1. Reducing the number of representatives of the Ministry; and
2. Granting a more significant role to the other stakeholders: students, universities, business organizations and regional government bodies involved in university education.

ANECA has full fiscal autonomy, with its financial resources originating from the General State Budget and from services rendered by ANECA through agreements signed with other institutions, further promoting its financial independence. Thus, the Agency has the capacity to engage in initiatives and with requests from universities and organisations not included in the programmes envisaged in the legislation, as the conduct of these tasks is funded by the independent projects.

### Operational independence

ANECA operates with clear independence in the development and modification of its evaluation processes and procedures, designed according to strictly technical principles, based on European reference criteria and adapted to the Spanish University System requirements. Prior to establishment of these principles, a number of university experts were consulted to examine the suitability of the processes and to incorporate their contributions<sup>20</sup>.

The assessment committees and panels participating in the procedures undergo rigorous training in the use of the tools designed by ANECA. The members of the panels and committees are selected and appointed in an autonomous manner on the merits of their knowledge and their scientific-technical skills, and independently of the universities to which they belong. All the experts sign a Code of Ethics, previously approved by the Governing Council, committing to fulfil their duties in a fully independent manner. The assessment criteria are published in advance in the documentation for each evaluation.

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<sup>20</sup> Evidence in [meetings/reports by the Board of Trustees](#) and the [Advisory Council](#)

### Independence of results

The assessment committees take the final decisions on the outcomes of the evaluation processes, independent of ministry and the universities. Reports are issued by ANECA following the decision, notified to the university concerned and are published. The reports on the evaluations of programmes, as issued by the agency, are binding on the Council of Universities and all other parties involved (universities, Autonomous Regions and Regional Governments). There is also an appeals process (see standard ESG 2.7 later in this report) in place should an institution wish to argue one or more points in the reports.

### **Analysis**

The panel was convinced, following its reading of the evidence supplied in the SAR and the accompanying documents together with the information provided during the interviews conducted during the site visit, that the operation of ANECA's policies and procedures surrounding the design, implementation and reporting on all the evaluation processes takes place in a fully independent and autonomous manner. The panel was convinced that no third-party influence could be brought to bear on the outcomes of evaluations. Full consultations took place prior to the design of procedures with all relevant stakeholders. The assessment criteria are published and transparent, once decided on.

Significant changes had occurred in the independence of the operations of the agency following the last external review in 2012. These changes had been enshrined in the new Statutes approved in December 2015, with accompanying actions designed to deliver not only on the spirit of the legislation but in full compliance with it. The experts interviewed by the panel confirmed they had full authority to write their reports as they decided without any attempt to influence the content and recommendations of the reports either by ANECA or by the institutions where the evaluations were being conducted. The reports issued are accepted by ANECA without amendments and issued by ANECA to the relevant institutions and then published. The evaluation reports are binding on the Council of Universities and other parties.

**Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

### **ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

### **2012 review recommendation**

*Drawing on its programmes and their outcomes, ANECA should work to develop and publish system-wide analyses carefully selected according to explicit criteria.*

### **Evidence**

The agency issues a number of types of reports aimed at providing useful and interesting information to stakeholders, including (but not exclusively for) potential students and employers. The SAR details

a variety of types of report, all of which are published on the agency website and therefore easily accessible.

- Annual Reports on the status of external evaluation of quality at Spanish universities. These have been issued annually since 2006 and have been established as a reference for nationwide coordination for attaining quality assurance, aiming above all to provide a situational analysis of the repercussions of external quality evaluation measures on the Spanish University System and its evolution. There is an emphasis in the reports on quality improvement and enhancement. The reports focus on three main factors: the evaluation of universities and their centres; the evaluation of university education; and the evaluation of teaching and research staff at the universities.
- Statistical reports on the ANECA Data Bank of Statistics issued annually on the figures and indicators in the agency's external evaluation activities - currently focused on the evaluation of university degrees and of the quality of teaching and researching staff (PDI). Stakeholders are provided with public and systematic information on the evaluation activities, as a contribution to their knowledge and as an invitation to reflect on the current panorama; and, secondly, to provide useful information on evaluation procedures for detailed analysis, control and continuous enhancement of the procedures.

If required, reports can be drafted for each individual university evaluated, and each university can view its own data with a general reference set against which to compare itself.

- Reports on the review and enhancement of the evaluation procedures are issued periodically following an in-depth analysis of each of the procedures and their processes, with the participation of the leading stakeholders involved, including the students.

In the last few years, special attention has been paid to reviewing degrees through their various stages. A summary of the report on in-depth *Analysis and Review of the ACREDITA and ACREDITA PLUS Procedures* has been made available to the public. A summary of a report on the analysis of the VERIFCA degree evaluation procedure is available in Spanish on the agency website. The SAR details other reports that have been published by ANECA, including:

- i. *Universities and Rules on Permanence. Reflections for the future*
- ii. *White Paper on the design of university degrees in the digital economy framework*
- iii. *Report on Transitioning from the former Official University Degree Catalogue to the Register of Universities, Higher Education Colleges and Degrees (RUCT), and the adjustment between the supply and demand of places.*

## **Analysis**

The panel acknowledged the reports issued by ANECA and recognized that they fulfilled a need for society to be able to access information on the quality of the programmes offered in universities. The reports published to date cover core areas of responsibility and activity of the agency. The reports are welcomed by stakeholders and reference was made to their value in contributing to the development and enhancement of a quality culture in institutions. The annual reports provide regular updates on the status of higher education and provide a very useful source of information for both institutions and students as well as the general public. The statistical reports provide information useful in

particular for institutions as a basis for evidence-based decision making and the comparisons made in the reports inform the strategic planning activities of the institutions. Representatives of institutions interviewed by the panel confirmed that the reports are well received and that more reports broadly looking at higher education and providing data on the higher education system would be welcomed from the agency. Comments were made on the value of the reports which review the evaluation processes and comment on them. This applies to all types of evaluations conducted by the agency. Stakeholders expressed their respect for the work of the agency, the value it brings to enhancement of the quality of activities in institutions and the desire to have more reports along similar lines published by the agency. Stakeholders were of the opinion that the agency is best positioned to prepare such reports (rather than, for example, the Council of Universities).

The panel was of the view that, while ANECA is indeed substantially compliant with this standard, that more could be done by the agency to deliver reports on quality whose topics span the system and cover issues related to evaluations, and perhaps providing guidance to institutions as to best practices and approaches to be used in the development and enhancement of a quality culture in all activities.

#### **Panel commendation**

The panel commends the efforts made by the agency to analyse and comment on the value and activities taking place in higher education institutions.

#### **Panel recommendation**

The panel recommends that ANECA continues to analyse the data and information emerging from evaluations conducted and in particular the evaluation of programmes, and to expand the range of thematic reports published on the Spanish quality assurance system.

#### **Panel conclusion: substantially compliant**

### **ESG 3.5 RESOURCES**

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

#### **2012 review recommendations**

*ANECA should consider reintroducing some form of developmental appraisal in order to motivate and support its staff in their performance.*

*ANECA needs to address the current budgetary constraints strategically and establish priorities with regard to the development of new processes and procedures.*

#### **Evidence**

The SAR provided details, supported by extensive documentation, on the resources available to the agency: human, financial, technological and others. Clear evidence was provided to the panel of the statements made. The following is a brief summary of the current situation within the agency.

### Human resources

ANECA staff: The agency has a stable workforce with little turnover occurring. At present the staff complement numbers 87, with 69% having a Bachelor degree or higher. 90% of the staff have contracts of indefinite duration – thus providing a large degree of stability for the agency in terms of planning and delivery of long-term projects.

Each post in the agency is defined in a profile where the academic requirements (degree, ofimatics, languages), as well as attitudinal requirements (team working, leadership, communication skills, etc.) are stated.

In late 2013 and early 2014, the job performance of each member of staff was evaluated based on the professional grading system that was current at the time. The results of this evaluation were transmitted to the evaluated individuals, and meetings and talks were held between experts and evaluated employees to share impressions, and to advise the evaluated individuals of their strengths and areas for improvement. Resulting from the evaluation of job performance and the training needs analysis conducted by the agency, certain shortcomings were identified in the programmes, which were then included in training plans put in place for 2014 and 2015. In 2016, as a consequence of the Agency's change in status from a foundation to an autonomous public body, all training that took place was focused on preparing employees to work in a new technological environment and under the new operational protocols that were required.

The staff training plan is designed to ensure that all staff members involved both in evaluation procedures and in the internal management procedures receive the necessary training to guarantee consistency throughout the processes.

Evaluation and assessment staff: The members of the assessment committees within the various procedures are, for the most part, academics of renowned prestige, professionals, and in some cases experts in specific disciplines, as in the case, for instance, of the **ACREDITA PLUS Procedure**. Their main function is to perform external evaluations in a collegiate manner.

Table 5 below<sup>21</sup> provides a summary of staff, both external (national and international academic experts, students and professionals) and internal to ANECA (officers and administrative staff), that have participated in the various evaluation procedures over the past five years.

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<sup>21</sup> SAR Page 43

**Table 5: Participation of external experts and ANECA staff in each Procedure**

|                |                  | 2012           |             | 2013           |             | 2014           |             | 2015           |             | 2016           |             |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
|                |                  | External staff | ANECA staff | External staff | ANECA staff | External staff | ANECA staff | External staff | ANECA staff | External staff | ANECA staff |
| Programmes     | VERIFICA-MONITOR | 190            | 13          | 244            | 19          | 171            | 10          | 180            | 3           | 109            | 2           |
|                | ACREDITA         | -              | -           | 61             | 19          | 183            | 21          | 216            | 14          | 107            | 13          |
|                | ACREDITA PLUS    | -              | -           | -              | -           | 77             | 1           | 241            | 4           | 53             | 4           |
| Teaching staff | PEP              | 56             | 8           | 56             | 5           | 56             | 15          | 56             | 15          | 56             | 15          |
|                | ACADEMIA         | 2.236          | 21          | 2.236          | 15          | 2.236          | 15          | 2.236          | 15          | 2.236          | 15          |
|                | CNEAI            | -              | -           | -              | -           | -              | -           | -              | -           | 95             | 5           |
| Institutions   | AUDIT            | 5              | 2           | 14             | 2           | 8              | 2           | 11             | 2           | 10             | 2           |
|                | DOCENTIA         | 4              | 1           | 6              | 1           | 4              | 1           | 5              | 1           | 4              | 1           |

Financial resources

ANECA was established as an autonomous public body in 2016. The agency is funded primarily by the government in line with the submission made annually for funds together with the annual operational plan. Other sources of funding are: revenue deriving from international agreements, contracts for evaluation on demand, or other commissions by public or private entities. As an autonomous body ANECA is free to distribute its budget among its different units, allocated to each of the evaluation activities according to the agency's operational plan. The agency accounts for its expenditure in its annual report.

Table 6 below shows the distribution of expenditure for each activity<sup>22</sup>.

**Table 6: Distribution of expenditure for each activity**

| ACTIVITY                    | 2012      | 2013      | 2014      | 2015      |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Programmes                  | 2.331.531 | 2.394.828 | 2.593.818 | 3.212.653 |
| Institutions                | 529.731   | 737.022   | 671.798   | 658.871   |
| Teaching staff              | 3.821.555 | 2.902.387 | 2.786.061 | 3.554.345 |
| Management and coordination | 3.218.001 | 2.767.729 | 2.738.129 | 2.728.689 |

<sup>22</sup> Table 10. SAR Page 44

The agency has developed a scheme facilitating the charging of expenditure against the activity in which it was generated. This allows the actual expenditure activity to be known, which, among other things, serves as a basis on which to take decisions from a cost-saving point of view. The accounts are audited each year by the Management of the General Intervention Board of the Central Administration.

#### Technological resources

The IT Unit employs qualified professionals who endeavour continuously to enhance the software applications used in the evaluation processes, and to provide the necessary support to all of the Agency's activities. Occasionally, leading companies in the sector work together with the IT Unit to develop new software tools.

The agency has been equipped with the necessary means and infrastructure to allow the committees to work remotely with the sole requisite of having access to internet. This change has enabled more flexible and versatile meetings, as well as significant savings in costs. Videoconferences are held by all the committees dealing with degrees, for instance. The Agency has 'cloud' type facilities for collaboration, where information is exchanged with experts and the committee's workspaces are turned into dynamic and secure data-sharing platforms.

New software tools have been created to support the new evaluation procedures, namely, **ACREDITA**, **ACREDITA PLUS**, and **ACADEMIA**.

#### Other resources

##### Material resources

ANECA is located in a modern building close to Madrid's city centre (c/ Orense, 11) and well connected by public transport. The 14 meeting rooms at its main offices are equipped with all the necessary technology for holding meetings or evaluation sessions, either in person or on-line. The general services staff provide logistical support to meetings. In recent years the documentation centre has taken a more central role by providing support to the digitisation of documents reaching the agency in hard copy.

##### Information systems

Additionally, each unit has a common folder on the publicly accessed servers for each member of the unit. The ANECA website (developed both in Spanish and in English), together with external bulletins, is the external communications tool for reaching out to shareholders. Over recent years, social networks have also been incorporated (Twitter and YouTube) as vehicles for information and the dissemination of material related to quality evaluation in Higher Education. The intranet is the basic internal communications tool used within the agency, with a document repository available to all staff members. At the present time, a major effort is being made to centralise the data and information for the various evaluation processes on the Strategic Quality and Planning Unit (UCYPE) to make these available and accessible to all staff members.

#### **Analysis**

The panel was very impressed with the resources available to the agency, enabling it to carry out its work with a high level of efficiency and success. The low turnover rate of staff ensures a stable working



environment and allows staff to develop skills and proficiencies which benefit the agency and can be transferred to other staff. In interviews with staff the panel found that staff feel supported by management and that they are provided with training in the necessary skills and resources to enable them to do their job efficiently and well. Information is shared within the organisation.

All stakeholders interviewed confirmed the efficiency and professional way in which the services of the agency are delivered. There was no sense from the interviews that there is a shortage of resources. All interviewed were of the opinion that the agency uses its resources well and appropriately. Evaluations are conducted on time and according to process and procedures agreed. The agency develops an operational plan each year, based on the strategic objectives and targets identified in the strategic plan, is funded according to the costs identified in the operational plan as necessary for the activities, and reports on the expenditure in the annual report.

The material resources, including buildings and accommodation, the IT support and the accompanying infrastructure are all very adequate and allow the staff to concentrate on their responsibilities. The agency is fortunate to have access to the professional supports required.

#### **Panel commendations**

The panel commends the agency for its rigorous financial accounting procedures, for its dedication to staff development and support through appropriate training aimed at both professional and personal development, and for the systems in place that ensure all staff have access to relevant information to enable them to perform their duties to a high standard.

#### **Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

### **ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

#### **2012 review recommendation**

*ANECA should consider the introduction of a cross-agency process for the management of its internal quality assurance, and encourage a greater exchange of good practice across the Agency.*

*ANECA should consider including external stakeholders more directly in the internal evaluation and quality improvement activity of the Agency.*

#### **Evidence**

ANECA has defined an Internal Quality Assurance System oriented toward continuing enhancement, whose framework of reference is the document containing the *European Quality Assurance Criteria 2015*. The agency is registered in EQAR. ANECA has voluntarily agreed to comply with the *ECA Code of Good Practice* and to align its actions with the *Guidelines of Good Practices* of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

ANECA has received recognition from a number of European bodies, including the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAE) for the evaluation and granting of the European labels EUR-ACE®; the European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education (EQANIE) for the evaluation and granting of the European Quality labels EURO-INF, and the European Chemistry Thematic Network (ECTN) for the evaluation and granting of the labels EUROBACHELOR and EUROMASTER. This activity is conducted jointly with professional associations (IIE, CCII, CONCITI). ENAE has highlighted as a positive the interest demonstrated by the joint efforts of organisations in academic and professional fields to carry out the evaluation and in granting these labels.

Following the 2012 review by ENQA, ANECA set up a Quality and Strategic Planning Unit, whose main objective is to work towards maintaining and improving internal quality assurance within the agency.

ANECA has procedures and tools in place to guarantee the periodic revision and continuing enhancement of its activity at several levels. The agency has defined key performance indicators on the activities of the agency in delivering the strategic targets identified from the strategic plan which are monitored regularly. Under the direction of management in the agency all procedures are evaluated, involving an extensive, in-depth analysis of the procedures that takes into consideration the viewpoints of several internal and external agents involved in the procedure. Each procedure is regularly revised based on the outcomes of these evaluations and the actions are followed up in order to ensure continuing enhancement. Stakeholders confirmed their involvement in the internal review processes.

The agency uses two IT tools:

- a *Database for review and enhancement of evaluation procedures* to facilitate the continuing management, register and follow-up of opportunities for improvement from different sources (these include the meta-evaluation reports mentioned earlier), and the actions set in motion to ensure continuing enhancement of the procedures
- an *Application for managing IT issues* focused on enhancing IT tools supporting evaluation procedures and troubleshooting relating thereto.

The agency provided evidence of extensive follow-up and reflective mechanisms of all its procedures, including minutes of meetings of the Internal Coordination Commission, the Advisory Council, the Chairs of the ACADEMIA, PEP and CNEAI Commissions, the Commissions for Issuing Reports (CEI), the Agencies co-participating in the AUDIT and DOCENTIA Procedures, and meta-evaluations.

The panel was provided with access to all documents including evidence of revision of procedures following follow-up and incorporating revisions based on the ESG 2015<sup>23</sup>, and the contributions of stakeholders. Evidence was also provided of the mechanisms for appeal.

An open dialogue with the universities is maintained throughout the Agency's evaluation procedures. Meetings are held between the universities and the agency staff involved (jointly and individually for each university). These meetings are held throughout the delivery of the procedures and, on request, may be given a training or advisory format. In certain cases, such as the **ACREDITA Procedure**, these meetings may also serve to plan the evaluation tasks.

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<sup>23</sup> In the annexes to the documentation submitted the relationship between the programme criteria and the ESG 2015 was demonstrated.

ANECA complies with the legislation guaranteeing that no intolerant or discriminating attitude whatsoever shall be applied either to the staff employed at the agency or to users of the agency's services. In this manner, it applies the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in its internal and external screening processes, in all selection processes for representatives and in all activities and accreditation procedures.

Currently, ANECA operates nationwide in the evaluation of researching and teaching staff (PDI); and on a regional level in autonomous regions lacking a quality assurance agency with competences to evaluate institutions and programmes. In all cases, as appropriate under the applicable legislation, agreements are established with the national or regional governments with competences in university affairs. The agency has defined working procedures that include processes for the selection and evaluation of services provided, including those services subcontracted out. These are limited to supporting roles (IT and logistics).

The agency publishes its evidence of a comprehensive internal quality assurance policy that responds adequately to society and the various stakeholder groups.

### **Analysis**

The panel was convinced by the quality of the internal documents and the consistency with which stakeholders, both internal and external, described the activities of ANECA, and that the agency fulfils the requirements for internal quality assurance as set out in the ESG. The panel is convinced of the integrity of the agency and the adherence to ethical codes and standards for all its activities and the fact that this approach is a conscious one adopted by the agency with constant oversight. Staff routinely participate in internal quality assurance activities, and all staff are very well aware of the Quality unit within the agency and its role and activities. Stakeholders are regularly consulted and opinions are recorded and taken into account in future planning of activities. The agency provided the panel with evidence of the history and sequence of amendments to procedures and processes based on internal review and feedback received as well as informed by international good practices. The panel noted that these are documented for information of the staff.

The development of a dynamic strategic planning process, together with the annual operational plans and the subsequent reports published at the end of the year is evidence of the maturity of the approach of the agency towards the implementation of an active quality culture within the organisation.

### **Panel commendations**

The panel commends the agency for the establishment of an internal unit with responsibility for quality assurance internally within the agency. The panel also commends the efforts of the agency to continuously review its procedures, to include the views of all stakeholders and to revise its procedures as necessary or deemed appropriate.

### Panel recommendation

The panel recommends that an annual IQA report be published, primarily aimed at an internal readership and at developing an institutional memory of changes and developments.

**Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

### ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Standard:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

### Evidence

Legislation in Spain requires that, as a requirement to conducting *ex-ante* and *ex-post* accreditation, quality agencies 'should be registered under EQAR after successfully passing an external evaluation in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Higher Education'. In compliance with mandatory regulations, ANECA has engaged in its third external evaluation. The previous evaluations took place in 2007 and 2012.

The agency had recourse to a number of elements that assisted its self-reflection in preparation for the current external evaluation, including:

- The implementation of a Quality Assurance System that yields data and indicators: Strategic Plan, Annual Operational Plan, and Degree Proposal.
- More active and more constant participation by stakeholders, e.g. through regular meetings with Committees and the Advisory Council; Advisory Council reports; participation in meta-evaluations, conferences with universities (e.g. Conference on good practices **DOCENTIA**, informative conference on **ACREDITA**, **ACREDITA PLUS** and **AUDIT**; Almagro Conference for the reflection on Quality); the Rectors' Conference (CRUE), other Agencies (REACU and CURSA), participation in *Student Association Congresses*, participation in *Seminars with the Technical Quality Units*, etc.
- The recommendations and suggestions for improvements noted in previous external review reports by ENQA.
- Additionally, via a symposium and targeted visits, universities have been presented with the *Guide to drafting, putting into practice and evaluating learning outcomes*. This document aims to guide stakeholders through the complete process of designing degrees, and implementing and revising study plans.

### Analysis

The evidence available to the panel showed that the agency has a high regard for its obligations with respect to external review and itself seeks to undergo a review once every five years. The current review is the third in the present cycle. The agency has taken recommendations for change and improvement from the two previous reviews seriously and has implemented significant changes in its

procedures and processes as a consequence of these reviews. The panel reflected on the evidence provided on the actions taken by the agency and is satisfied that everything possible has been done to implement improvements, including legislative changes.

The development and implementation of the internal QA system that yields data and key performance indicators, the strategic plan, together with the annual operational plans and the annual reports all demonstrate the commitment of the agency to real change and improvement and that these are not simply exercises that the agency engages in. All stakeholders are involved both at the level of governance and also are widely consulted and listened to. In interviews, all expressed their satisfaction with the progress the agency has made in the past five years in constantly developing and reviewing its processes. Institutions welcomed in particular the implementation of the AUDIT programme and expressed a wish to see this become a routine part of the agenda of all institutions.

### **Panel commendations**

The panel commends the positive and constructive approach of the agency to self-reflection and external review.

### **Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

## **ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

### **2012 review recommendations**

*ANECA should further consolidate the AUDIT Programme and should explore ways to ensure the commitment of all Spanish universities to this process.*

*ANECA should continue with the development of the ACREDITA programme and aim to commence implementation of the programme in the near future.*

### **Evidence**

The SAR and accompanying documentation submitted to the panel describe in great detail how the agency complies with this standard. The details are summarised in the table below taken from the SAR (page 50). Table 7 shows how ANECA's various evaluation procedures, national and cross-border activities, adhere to the criteria in ESG Part 1. The specific relationships between criteria/guidelines used by the agency in its procedures and the criteria given in the ESG may be consulted in the documentation referred to in the procedures. Legislation in Spain requires the agency to adhere to the ESG in conducting evaluations.

**Table 7: Compliance with each national evaluation procedure/process in the ESG in part one**

| EVALUATION PROCESSES | PROGRAMME EVALUATION                           |                        |                               |                        |                  | INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION |                       |
|----------------------|--|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
|                      | VERIFICA Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree | VERIFICA Doctorate     | MONITOR                       | ACREDITA               | ACREDITA PLUS    | AUDIT                    | DOCENTIA              |
| ESG 1.1              | Criterion 9                                    | Criterion 8            | Criterion 3                   | Criterion 3            | Criterion 3      | Guideline 1.0            | Dimension 1           |
| ESG 1.2              | Criteria 2, 5 and 8                            | Criteria 1, 4, 5 and 8 | Criteria 2, 5 and 8           | (*2)                   | (*2)             | Guideline 1.1            | Dimension 2           |
| ESG 1.3              | Criteria 5 and 8                               | Criteria 4, 5 and 8    | Criteria 1 and 6              | Criteria 1 and 6       | Criteria 1 and 6 | Guideline 1.2            | Dimension 2           |
| ESG 1.4              | Criterion 4                                    | Criterion 3            | Guidelines 1.1 and 1.2        | Guidelines 1.4 and 1.5 | Criterion 1      | Guideline 1.2            | Not applicable        |
| ESG 1.5              | Criterion 6                                    | Criterion 6            | Criterion 4                   | Criterion 4            | Criterion 4      | Guideline 1.3            | Dimensions 1, 2 and 3 |
| ESG 1.6              | Criterion 7                                    | Criterion 7            | Criterion 5                   | Criterion 5            | Criteria 5 and 9 | Guideline 1.4            | Dimension 2           |
| ESG 1.7              | Criteria 8 and 9                               | Criterion 8            | Criteria 3 and 6              | Criteria 3 and 7       | Criteria 3 and 7 | Guideline 1.5            | Dimension 2           |
| ESG 1.8.             | Criterion 4                                    | Criterion 3            | Criterion 2                   | Criterion 2            | Criterion 2      | Guideline 1.6            | Dimensions 1 and 2    |
| ESG 1.9              | Criteria 8 and 9                               | Criterion 8            | Guideline 1.1 and Criterion 3 | Criteria 1 and 3       | Criteria 1 and 3 | Guideline 1.1            | Dimension 2           |
| ESG 1.10             | (*1)   | (*1)                   | (*3)                          | (*4)                   | (*4)             | (*5)                     | (*6)                  |

(\*1) VERIFICA. The ex-ante ACCREDITATION process is the first stage in a normative framework that requires official university degrees to submit cyclically to an external evaluation process. The legislation of reference in this case is Royal Decree 1393/2007 and its subsequent updates.

(\*2) VERIFICA procedure evaluates, through several criteria, aspects of the design of degrees relating to the definition of educational planning, the intended learning outcomes and the various rules for student progress and retention. In the ACREDITA procedure the outcomes of this design are eventually reviewed according to Criterion 1 and 6.

(\*3) MONITOR. The follow-up process for an official degree implies that official university degrees should undergo a cyclical external evaluation process. This aspect is stated in the legal regulation currently in force in Spain, which includes Royal Decree 1393/2007 and its subsequent updates.

(\*4) ACREDITA. The accreditation renewal process implies that official university degrees must undergo a cyclical external assessment process. This aspect is stated in the legal regulation currently in force in Spain, which includes Royal Decree 1393/2007 and its subsequent updates

(\*5) AUDIT. Implementation certification requires the renewal of the certificate every 4 years.

(\*6) DOCENTIA. Degree certification requires implies the renewal of the certificate every 5 years.

The agency published a report in 2016 covering a broader study of compliance with the ESG Part 1 in each of the programme and institutional evaluation procedures, and explaining how each of the criteria/dimensions in the procedures meets each of these criteria. This report is publicly available on the web site of the agency.

The following is a list of the ESG, Part 1 criteria.

- 1.1 Policy for quality assurance
- 1.2 Design and approval of programmes
- 1.3. Student-centred teaching, learning and assessment
- 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
- 1.5 Teaching staff
- 1.6 Learning resources and student support
- 1.7 Information management
- 1.8 Public information
- 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
- 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Very detailed evidence was presented in both the SAR itself and also the extensive accompanying documentation (all available on the agency web site) of the high level of compliance with these criteria and of the efforts made by the agency to ensure the inclusion of the standards and guidelines of the ESG in systems and pilots for quality assurance developed both in the national systems and also in the international projects – specifically those that focussed on development of quality assurance systems in Mexico, Peru and Armenia. As described earlier the primary role of ANECA in these projects was to guide, to train and to support the national institutions in the projects undertaken. ANECA was not itself accrediting the programmes/institutions in these countries. Full details were provided in the SAR.

### **Analysis**

The panel was provided with detailed accounts of how ANECA ensures the meeting of this criterion in all its procedures, including the international projects it has engaged in. The panel was satisfied that the agency not only includes this overarching criterion explicitly in all its procedures but that it is an absolute requirement that it is met prior to any accreditation awarded. The panel found that the criteria in the agency's extensive procedures (described earlier in this report) are well structured and cover all standards from part 1 of the ESG. The panel was satisfied that this is core to all the agency's procedures.

In developing all the accreditation procedures, the agency consulted widely and with all stakeholders to ensure the best and most appropriate systems were put in place. The regular review and assessment of the effectiveness of the procedures also provides re-assurance and certainty to all stakeholders on the quality of higher education in Spain. This was confirmed in all interviews conducted both with internal and external stakeholders.

### **Panel commendation**

The panel commended the successful efforts of the agency to support and make every effort to ensure the implementation of internal quality assurance in all institutions.

### **Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

## ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

### 2012 review recommendation

*ANECA should strengthen the systematic involvement of external stakeholders especially students, and at the early stages of any new development.*

*ANECA should make more formally established and effective use of its Advisory Board.*

*ANECA should review its policy relating to the use of international experts within its processes, and seek to strengthen the recruitment of such experts.*

*ANECA should consider, within the limitations of possible legal constraints, the inclusion of students in the membership of its assessment committees concerned with the accreditation of academic staff.*

*ANECA should strengthen its dialogue and level of contact with institutions with a view to taking further the aspects of improvement and enhancement in its quality assurance activities.*

### Evidence

In line with its strategic objectives and the legal requirements for higher education in Spain. As described earlier, there are two kinds of evaluation procedure:

- Compulsory for Higher Education Institutions (**VERIFICA, MONITOR, ACREDITA**)
- Voluntary for Higher Education Institutions (**AUDIT, DOCENTIA, ACREDITA PLUS**).

In both types of evaluation, the agency's Management designs and approves the evaluation procedures, having heard the opinion of the corresponding advisory bodies and in accordance with the Strategic Plan, the action plans and the current legislation. In the design, attention is paid to the ESG, as well as to other European references. In the constant review of procedures undertaken by the agency, the agency ensures that good practices continue to be developed and implemented and that the methodologies remain the most appropriate for the purpose. All the agency's evaluation procedures encompass the following four stages:

1. Design, whereby a team is appointed to design the new procedure with representatives of ANECA's staff, students and relevant experts (both national and international), and a budget is allocated.
2. Procedures are verified for suitability – usually by the conduct of a pilot phase, a review of the outcomes and adaptation of the design as deemed appropriate. Documentation is then developed.
3. Information on the procedure is then widely disseminated, especially through the medium of the web site and also notifications to the universities concerned.



4. The procedure is regularly reviewed and updated so that the criteria used and the processes are the best and most appropriate. A specific focus of such reviews is the identification of areas for improvement and the subsequent updating of the procedure.

In the case of legally regulated procedures that are compulsory throughout the Spanish territory, ANECA participates in Quality Agency coordination bodies, REACU and CURSA<sup>24</sup>.

ANECA, furthermore, has a number of mechanisms for verifying its compliance with the aims and purposes previously defined and published:

- Programme evaluation procedures: in **VERIFICA**, **MONITOR**, **ACREDITA** and **ACREDITA PLUS** the assessment committees hold regular meetings and submit reports on the evolution of programme evaluation procedures for degrees that fall under their competence.
- Institutional evaluation procedures: in **DOCENTIA** and **AUDIT** the evaluation processes are coordinated through meetings with the Regional Governments' agencies.

In order to guarantee efficient and effective external quality assurance at institutions, ANECA has set up synergies among several of its procedures, allowing institutions to cut costs and bear a lighter workload. In particular, the **ACREDITA** Procedure exempts institutions from giving evidence of some of their criteria, in the event that they have received certification of having implemented the **DOCENTIA** and **AUDIT** Procedures. Similarly, in the **ACREDITA PLUS** Procedure, *ex post* accreditation may be obtained for the degree programme and the European or international label, benefiting from the synergies between the two evaluation procedures.

Similarly, the **MONITOR** Procedure aims at highlighting the issues and actions, if any, that may hinder future degree *ex post* accreditation.

ANECA has taken part in the Erasmus Mundus Project 'Joint Programmes: Quality Assurance and Recognition of degrees awarded (JOQAR)', whose aim is to create a European coordination team specialised in information on joint programmes evaluated in Europe and the recognition of their degrees.

ANECA has also taken part in the evaluation process for a Master's Degree coordinated by Frontex in late 2012 with the evaluation agencies in the countries whose universities formed part of the joint degree consortium, applying the methodology tested in the JOQAR project (see page 18 of this report for a brief description of how ANECA adapts its methodologies when working abroad).

## Analysis

The panel was convinced by the quality of the documentation presented by the agency and the confirmation in interviews with agency staff and other stakeholders that ANECA takes its responsibility for the development and implementation of procedures that are fit for purpose and use relevant methodologies very seriously. The panel was impressed by the commitment to continuously review and revise the procedures and by the willingness of the agency to listen to the views of all stakeholders and to incorporate revisions, following suggestions, into the procedures. A primary focus of all activities is the quality of higher education and how best to support and improve this.

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<sup>24</sup> As set forth in article 4 of ANECA's Statutes

The representatives of HEIs interviewed during the site visit all expressed their support and respect for the agency and its activities. All were of the opinion that the agency brings added value to higher education in Spanish universities and that they would support the agency as it seeks to develop its evaluation processes further. The involvement of all key stakeholders in all stages of the agency's activities, from advisory to implementation was commented on very favourably during interviews. Stakeholders perceive the agency to be outward looking and open to opinions and suggestions, while retaining the responsibility for final decisions on the procedures. It was very evident that the agency had taken the recommendations in the 2012 review very seriously and had put in place new governance structures aimed at delivering on the implementation of the recommendations.

The panel, having considered all aspects in detail, was of the opinion that the system currently in place in Spain is very controlling and compliance with it places a significant burden on institutions. The panel was impressed with the level of implementation across institutions and the commitment to development and implementation of an internal quality assurance system and culture in institutions, but was of the view that perhaps, as in happening in other jurisdictions in Europe, a move towards an audit-type system for external monitoring would be timely. The panel is fully aware that such a move in direction in implementing a quality assurance system is not something that ANECA can determine by itself and that this would require, *inter alia*, legislative changes.

**Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

### **ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES**

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

#### **2012 review recommendation**

*ANECA should establish a more active dialogue with the universities on the outcomes of its assessments and their contribution to the development of study programmes.*

*In general, wherever relevant and appropriate, ANECA should work to align its programmes and procedures more closely with the model outlined in this standard.*

*In developing the procedure for ACREDITA, ANECA should consider the inclusion of a self-evaluation and site visit element.*

#### **Evidence**

All information on the procedures developed at the agency which are focused on evaluation of programmes and institutions is available on the agency website. The procedures include: a self-evaluation stage (self-evaluation or equivalent documentation, submitted by the institution on its

behalf), the revision thereof by an assessment committee, and a report providing guidance for the actions taken by the institution, all of which must be published on the corresponding website. In the case of procedures comprising an implementation stage, the evaluation is complemented by a site visit during the course of which stakeholders are interviewed. Table 8 below<sup>25</sup> details the different elements included in the various evaluation processes:

**Table 8: Elements included in the various evaluation processes**

| Self-evaluation process | Self-evaluation report (IA) | External evaluation (Includes students) | Appeals | Site Visit | Publication of the report with recommendations | Follow-up of the recommendations in the report   |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------|------------|--|--|
| PROGRAMMES              | VERIFICA                    | ✓                                       | ✓       | ✓          | ✓  | Performed by means of the MONITOR Procedure  |
|                         | MONITOR                     | ✓                                       | ✓       |            | ✓  | This comprises the follow-up process for the VERIFICA and MODIFICA Procedures  |
|                         | ACREDITA                    | ✓                                       | ✓       | ✓          | ✓  | The accreditation report establishes the frequency of follow-up and any aspects to which special attention will be paid. The report will also state the date for the next accreditation of the degree.   |
|                         | ACREDITA PLUS               | ✓                                       | ✓       | ✓          | ✓  | The report on the label obtained will establish the timeline for awarding the label. In the event of having included prescriptions, the concession period will be duly reduced, and the university, in the meantime, will report on their compliance.  |
| INSTITUTIONS            | AUDIT                       | ✓                                       | ✓       | ✓          | ✓  | As soon as the IQAS implementation certificate has been delivered, the faculties must notify ANECA in writing of any changes made each year to their systems. ANECA will evaluate the changes and the results obtained therefrom and issue a notification to the faculty indicating whether or not the certification will be extended. |
|                         | DOCENTIA                    | ✓                                       | ✓       | ✓          | ✓  | Follow-up of implementation of the system is one of the stages in this programme. Nevertheless, throughout the stages, all reports submitted will include follow-up of the recommendations made in the previous report.<br><br>Follow-up of certification is also foreseen in the procedure.   |

<sup>25</sup> SAR page 58

As a part of all processes, the agency submits a draft report to the institution so that factual errors may be corrected before the report is finalised. The institution may also submit observations about the result. In the situation where an institution may wish to challenge a finding in the report an appeal may be brought before the Committee for Guarantees and Procedures.

All reports corresponding to programme evaluations are published on the agency web site search engine *What to study and where?* and reports on institutional evaluations are published on the website for each procedure: (AUDIT and DOCENTIA).

The agency provides training both to institutions and to experts and stakeholders involved in the assessment panels. In so far as is possible/appropriate, the same procedures are conducted in the international projects (discussed earlier on page 18).

### **Analysis**

The panel was convinced that this standard is met fully by the agency, and that the agency makes every effort possible to ensure that institutions fully engage with it so that the full benefits of the process may be gained. Stakeholders interviewed all confirmed that the process is worthwhile and thorough, and that the institutions do use the outcomes to improve their processes, systems and the education provided. It was noted that a site visit is not part of the VERIFICA and MONITOR Procedures but is part of all the other evaluation procedures. The panel felt that this approach is the most appropriate one for the purposes of the particular evaluation procedures.

### **Panel commendation**

The panel commends the attention to detail paid by the agency in its criteria applied in its procedures and processes, and the approaches taken to ensure adherence to these criteria by institutions.

### **Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

## **ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS**

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

### **Evidence**

The agency views the work of external experts conducted on behalf of ANECA as a core part of the work of ANECA and the screening and appointment of external reviewers is of vital importance to guarantee that the agency renders its services in the best possible manner. The screening process is the responsibility of ANECA and is conducted in a straightforward and transparent manner, following the criteria established *a priori* for each of the procedures.

In 2014 and 2015 a public call was made for a peer reviewer selection process for the agency's range of procedures. This screening process was carried out on the basis of the applications received and following a formal application. The basic requirements for all expert reviewers were defined (e.g.: candidates must be independent of the organisations being accredited, certified or evaluated, and of any institutions or bodies with political influence; candidates must commit to respecting and

complying with ANECA's code of ethics, thus guaranteeing their ethical and responsible behaviour in the discharge of their duties). Some specific requirements were also defined depending on the procedure and the profile required in each case.

A majority of the procedures allow the panel to be totally or partially rejected by the institution being evaluated before the process commences, both in the case of institutional and programme evaluations. All expert reviewers selected by ANECA must undergo training before conducting any evaluation assignment for ANECA. The training sessions are specific to the procedure to be undertaken. In general, training is based on the following three dimensions:

- Technical training in the procedures: background, applicable legislation, the EHEA, ESG standards, and the specific technical documentation for each procedure.
- Training in technologies: the use of tools/software apps that will be used to conduct the evaluation, both for the evaluation itself and for any teleconference meetings.
- Training in evaluator skills that are role-specific. For instance, in the **ACREDITA** Procedure, there are three training areas that correspond to the diversity and experience of the experts on the panel:
  - o Type 1 Training: for experts who have experience in the procedure following participation in the pilot project. This training activity aims to update experts' currency, and to present the aspects that are yielding the best results and those that offer room for improvement. In addition, these sessions encourage a collective exchange of impressions between experts and the Agency.
  - o Type 2 Training: aimed at experts who have only taken part in the ANECA pilot project and evaluations performed in the second half of 2014. At these sessions, the experience gained throughout the implementation of the procedure is shared with the experts, and any new developments in the procedure since 2015 are explained.
  - o Type 3 Training: for experts taking part for the first time in the **ACREDITA** Procedure.

Thus, before starting any new evaluation, certification or accreditation process, ANECA ensures that all experts take part in a training event and become fully acquainted with the methodology and the evaluation model used.

For procedures focusing on evaluations of programmes and institutions, the evaluation team consists of two academic evaluators, one professional expert and one student. For procedures focused on degree programmes, a database of experts<sup>26</sup> is available, listing all the activities conducted by these experts within each of the procedures. Each year, an evaluation of the work performed by the committees is conducted on the basis of criteria previously established by the Director of each of the corresponding Divisions.

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<sup>26</sup> This evidence can only be checked in ANECA's premises and is not available to the public at large.

All experts are required to adhere to the Code of Ethics developed by the agency and to sign a Conflict of Interest declaration.

### **Analysis**

It was evident to the panel that ANECA places a high degree of importance on the peer experts used in the evaluation exercises. The fact that experts have been appointed following a public call for expressions of interest, submission of detailed CVs by the proposed experts and assessment by an ANECA panel to appoint the experts for the particular procedure, points to the importance the agency places on the quality and level of expertise of the peer reviewers. The details of the experts are held in a confidential database accessible to the staff and committees of ANECA, while the names are published on the agency website. The agency seeks to include as many international experts as possible in evaluations – the only restriction, aside from the disciplinary expertise, being the need to be fluent in Spanish. All evaluation panels include student representation.

All experts undergo a training process organised by ANECA and designed to be fit for purpose. Depending on the level of familiarity of the expert with the agency's procedures, the training the expert undergoes is tailored to the specific task the expert will be undertaking and to ensure the achievement of the objectives of the evaluation. The training has been improved as the agency has incorporated suggestions for improvement from the experts and other stakeholders involved. At all times, the agency seeks feedback on all its activities from all those engaged in the activities and aims at enhancing its activities as a consequence. In particular, the panel noted that reviewers participating in the international projects were trained with a specific focus on the jurisdiction involved and the national requirements incorporated.

The panel was assured of the independence of the procedures of appointment and selection of relevant experts from the institution/programme undergoing evaluation. All the stakeholders interviewed expressed their confidence in the system and in the fact that the views expressed are listened to by the agency and taken into account in future decisions.

### **Panel commendations**

The panel commends the procedure by which experts are sought, appointed and prepared for the evaluation procedures and the efforts of the agency to include experts from society as well as disciplinary experts and students, both national and international.

### **Panel recommendation**

The panel would encourage the agency to continue and extend its efforts to include international experts in review panels.

### **Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

## ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

### 2012 review recommendation

*ANECA should provide more detailed guidance for its committees relating to their decision-making processes.*

*ANECA should have a clear policy on the involvement of ANECA staff in its assessment committees with a view to ensuring consistency of practice.*

### Evidence

All documentation relevant to its evaluation procedures are published by the agency on its web site. Thus they are available at all times to all stakeholders – the public as well as institutions and government. Included on the web site are:

- *Programme evaluation procedures*: the applicable legal documentation; guides to support drafting the reports; assessment templates; links to software applications for each of the procedures; composition of the committees and/or panels; frequently asked questions.
- *Institutional evaluation procedures*: the applicable legal documentation (as required); links to software applications for each of the procedures (as required); calls; quality assessment bodies; frequently asked questions, guides and documents.

The assessment criteria, guidelines and methods applied by a panel, committee or commission members in drafting their reports are known to all members through the information and training sessions they receive before commencing evaluation assignments. The agency ensures that all participants have received the training and information they need to conduct an evaluation. The officers/secretaries involved in each of the procedures are responsible for ensuring the committees' compliance with each of the criteria, uniformly and systematically, in each procedure.

In procedures for programme evaluation:

- In the **VERIFICA** and **MONITOR** Procedures there are two committees involved in the evaluation process; (a) assessment committees per branch of knowledge (CER), which are discipline-based; and (b) committees responsible for the issuing of reports (CEI). The CER carry out the evaluation of universities' degree proposals, on the basis of which the CEI issue their opinions. In all cases the final decision on the evaluation is taken as a body. The committees are composed of the chair, academic specialists, professionals, students and a secretary.
- In the **ACREDITA** and **ACREDITA PLUS** Procedures, the agreements within the different committees and panels are reached by consent, so that the experts' decision is taken as a body and complies with the criteria established in the accreditation system.

In both programmes, the visiting panels are required to visit the faculty/institution at which the degree being evaluated is delivered and, subsequently, to draft a report on the visit.

The Accreditation Committee is responsible for analysing the report drafted by the expert panel on the outcomes of the site visit, the self-evaluation report completed by the university and any other information in the accreditation dossier for the degree (which contains the evaluation reports of other ANECA procedures: **VERIFICA**, **MONITOR**, **AUDIT** and **DOCENTIA** that affect the degree). The Committee issues the binding evaluation report for *ex post* accreditation (or non-accreditation). In the **ACREDITA PLUS** Procedure, the Accreditation Committees for EUR-ACE® or EURO-INF are responsible for taking the decision regarding obtaining international labels.

In institutional evaluation procedures:

- In **DOCENTIA**, the evaluation processes are coordinated through meetings with regional agencies, where the evaluation activities and results are agreed upon and reviewed. To prove that the criteria are interpreted homogeneously, a committee examines dossiers originating from different Agencies and issues reports to ANECA.
- In **AUDIT** the procedure's certification committee ensures the uniform interpretation of the criteria in all evaluation events performed, thus taking responsibility for the coordination and standardisation of all evaluation procedures.

### **Analysis**

The panel was satisfied that the agency has full and very detailed guidelines and criteria for all its evaluation procedures and that these are publicly available, easily accessible and transparent. ANECA has developed detailed guidelines for each committee on its modus operandi and its level of decision-making and the role of ANECA support staff. The interviews conducted confirmed that all were satisfied with the level and detail of information supplied. Appreciation for the quality enhancement focus of activities was expressed by all and for the clarity and intelligibility of all the documentation involved, including templates etc., the oversight of the application of the procedures ensures, in so far as is possible, that procedures are applied in a consistent and equitable manner across the system.

The panel discussed in interviews with different groups of stakeholders the issue of consistency in outcomes of the VERIFICA and ACREDITA processes. There is a very high turnover of decisions, a large number of experts involved and a two-layer system of experts and the commission. The panel considered that this must pose a significant challenge for the agency in ensuring and demonstrating the consistency of its decisions. However the panel found no evidence that this is a difficulty for the agency. Stakeholders expressed their satisfaction with the agency's performance in this regard. The panel was also conscious of the fact that the system is a requirement of the Spanish legislation as it is currently written.

**Panel conclusion: fully compliant**



## ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

### 2012 review recommendations

*ANECA should seek to identify more clearly the needs of the intended readership of its reports.*

*ANECA should evaluate its publication policies with a view to providing more information, and aim to publish reports as soon as they are completed.*

*ANECA should publish more extensive and comprehensive reports relating to the AUDIT and DOCENTIA programmes.*

*ANECA should consider publishing reports that contain more information on the criteria, the considerations of the committees and basis for the recommendations.*

### Evidence

The structure of the reports, as well as the systematic process used in drafting them, is defined and explained in the documentation accompanying the agency's procedures. As part of this process, in all of the procedures, the evaluated parties are given an opportunity to point out possible errors of interpretation before the report is finalised. However the panel was concerned that the very detailed reports of 50 pages or more initially submitted by assessment panels are not published or publicly available. It emerged in discussions that these very detailed reports on programmes reviewed and assessed are not published but that a separate committee established by ANECA prepares a summary report (approximately 10 pages) which is the one sent to the universities and published on the web site.

To facilitate drafting the reports by the review panels and the oversight committees the agency has developed a number of sets of guidelines for drafting the reports on each procedure. The aim of the guidelines is to ensure all criteria for evaluations are addressed and also to ensure, in so far as is possible, the homogeneity of the reports in terms of content and style. The agency continuously seeks feedback from reviewers and from those who have undergone a review as to the quality and usefulness of the guidelines and suggestions for improvement. The guidelines for reports are tailored to the objectives and precise purposes of each evaluation carried out. A brief summary is provided below:

- Programme evaluation procedures:
  - VERIFICA Procedure: general information on the degree, applicable committee and legislation, applications for changes, motivation for each of the proposed criteria, recommendations.

- ACREDITA Procedure and ACREDITA PLUS Procedure (EURO-INF and EURO-ACE®): general information on the degree, applicable committee and legislation, compliance with the assessment criteria (for each of the dimensions in the procedure, a value is given for the criteria), motivation: the issue of a final evaluation report for *ex post* accreditation that may be favourable or unfavourable, recommendations for improving the degree. The university also submits an improvement plan and, in the case of degrees in ACREDITA PLUS, the report bearing the corresponding international quality label.
- MONITOR Procedure: general data on the applicable degree, committee and legislation, and remarks for each of the dimensions.
- Institutional evaluation procedures:
  - AUDIT: Overall evaluation, justification, opportunities for improvement and strengths.
  - DOCENTIA: Composition of the assessment committee, context of the institution, overall evaluation, compared data, analysis, main conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for improvement, and good practices implemented by the institution.

In addition, before submitting the reports to the interested parties, ANECA has set up control mechanisms for quality assurance and to guarantee consistency in the results shown in the reports to be submitted.

For example, ANECA's technical staff completes two readings of the reports:

- An individual reading to verify that both the redaction and the content of the report provide an accurate rendition of the original data, and that the text is not liable to erroneous interpretation by third parties.
- A transverse reading of all the reports issued to a single institution, to verify the homogeneity in all common information.
- In the ACREDITA Procedure, an expert conducts an evaluation of the common aspects of a given university's degrees (internal quality assurance system and public information regarding the degree), with the purpose of giving consistency to evaluations.

Reports on programme and institutional evaluation are published unabridged on the ANECA website:

- Reports on programme evaluations are published on the agency's on-line search engine *What to study and where?*, accessible on the agency website, which provides stakeholders, and especially students (present and future), with comprehensive information on Bachelor's Degrees, Master's Degrees and Doctorates offered at Spanish universities. The information provided is complementary to the RUCT.
- The institutional evaluation reports are published on the website for each procedure, including reports on activities conducted in projects internationally.

## **Analysis**

The panel was able to access all the final reports on the agency's web site, covering evaluations over the past five years and more, together with the relevant templates and guidelines. Extensive

information was provided to the panel via the web site links. The panel was convinced by the documentation that the agency somewhat meets the standard in its reporting and furthermore that the system of reporting is constantly under review with the aim of ensuring the reports fulfil the needs of the stakeholders, in particular the students and employers. It is not clear how extensively the reports are read by students/potential students but the students interviewed by the panel all agreed that the published reports are useful and read.

The reports are evidence-based and are supported by the documentation submitted by the institutions and by the evidence gathered by panels during site visits. Students interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the entire process and felt that their *'voice is listened to equally with that of the other experts on the panels'*. The experts were satisfied with the level of support received from the staff of the agency in assisting with the reporting and ensuring objectivity, along with equal treatment of all universities – public and private.

Those interviewed expressed their appreciation of summary reports and especially of reports that span the sector, finding these types of reports providing an excellent source of information useful, *inter alia*, for strategic planning and management within the institutions (see also comment under ESG 3.4). All expressed their respect for the agency's reports, believing that they are generated in a fair and equitable manner and presenting evidence objectively.

The panel discovered, during discussions with both experts and stakeholders, that initial reports are as long as 60-70 pages and contain very detailed discussion and consideration of evidence in relation to the evaluation being conducted. However, the final report is usually less than 10 pages long, thus leading to the conclusion that a lot of valuable evidence and conclusions are not included in the final report published. The panel understood the concerns that had been expressed in previous reviews as to the length of the reports and the value of the summary reports published as being easily accessible by students and other stakeholders. However, there is a need to develop a style of report that can include more/all of the evidence considered during the evaluation. The panel considers that the agency needs to continue to consider this very important issue and how best it can be addressed. This is a significant issue for any quality assurance agency. The panel understood that there are good reasons for the present system, including agreements with REACU, but nonetheless considers that more information is available than is given to the institutions.

#### **Panel commendation**

The panel commends the efforts made by the agency to develop appropriate and useful, readable reports, in response to recommendations in previous reviews and to comments by stakeholders.

#### **Panel recommendations**

The panel recommends that the agency consider how best to include all the valuable information contained in the 'long' reports in the published reports.

#### **Panel conclusion: substantially compliant**

## ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

### Evidence

ANECA has a comprehensive appeals system available to all and published on the agency web site together with the procedures and policies for all evaluations. The appeals system includes the possibility of an appeal being made objecting to the appointment of one or more members of an evaluation team and action being taken as a consequence. All appeals must be evidence-based.

The Committee for Guarantees and Programmes (CGP), established in March 2013, applies a transverse approach to ensuring proper implementation of the published certifiable evaluation criteria in all the agency's procedures, and in any evaluations undertaken by ANECA by agreement with other bodies or institutions.

In particular, it is responsible for examination and determination of:

- Claims against negative decisions in Programme assessment procedure.
- Appeals against negative decisions resulting from the Teaching Staff Evaluation Procedure (not within the remit of this panel and thus not discussed here).
- Appeals against negative reports on applications for exemption from the rule demanding that only members of a body of senior lecturers are eligible to apply for accreditation as 'Catedráticos de Universidad' (Professors) (not within the remit of this panel and thus not discussed here).
- Other evaluation duties assigned by the Management Board.

Moreover, the CGP assists the Management Board in activities related to other evaluation procedures taken up by ANECA by agreement with the Ministry, universities or other bodies, and conducts assessment of experts' and evaluation professionals' performance, paying special attention to their compliance with the Code of Ethics.

The CGP's operating procedures were established at its first meeting, held on 21 March 2013, and the Committee became fully operational in April 2013.

In the period April 2013 to the 31 December 2015, the CGP has resolved 889 appeals corresponding to the various contractual figures in the Teaching Staff Evaluation Procedure for recruitment (PEP), 42 appeals for Exemption, eight appeals relating to Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's Degrees in the VERIFICA Procedure, one for the AUDIT Procedure and one report regarding the Code of Ethics requested by the ANECA Management.

The ultimate purpose of the CGP is to safeguard the implementation of the published evaluation criteria by the corresponding evaluation committees in each of the procedures, ensuring that sufficient justification is given for the decisions taken, which in every case should clearly address the appellant's complaint. The committee is not required to conduct a further evaluation and discharges

its duties availing of the information and evidence provided by the appropriate committees and acts with full independence. On some occasions, and in the event of dysfunctions or incoherence in any evaluation or report, the CGP has proposed modifications or corrections to the evaluation procedures, which have at all times been accepted and addressed by the relevant committee.

Other indications of the impact, efficiency and correct practice of the CGR, as stated by the agency, have been:

- the approval met by complainants, who have not had to appeal to a higher court;
- the progressive decrease in the number of appeals, giving evidence of the improvements suggested in the Committee proceedings; and
- the reduction in the number of cases in which the respective committees' opinions have had to be rectified.

The process for lodging an appeal and having it considered by the CGP is essentially the same for all the evaluation procedures. A draft evaluation report is issued by the relevant committee, is sent to the institution, and a defined period of days is allowed for its consideration. If the institution decided to lodge an appeal it must do so promptly. The details of the appeal are considered by the CGP and a decision made which is binding. Over the period of time some of the procedures have been amended consequent on decisions made by the committee.

With respect to complaints against the agency itself, ANECA has established a procedure for handling all complaints and suggestions. All complaints will be answered within a maximum of 20 days. The Quality and Strategic Planning Unit is responsible for monitoring this process. All complaints will be reviewed periodically, with a view to taking actions to prevent their recurrence.

### **Analysis**

The panel was convinced both by the documentation provided and the evidence submitted that the agency does operate an appropriate appeals system, whereby appeals are considered and determined in a timely fashion by a dedicated committee and in an independent manner. The paucity of appeals on outcomes of the programme and institution evaluation procedures leads to the conclusion that the procedures are well organised and managed in an objective and unbiased fashion and that the information regarding the procedures is accurate and appropriate.

Those interviewed confirmed this opinion and all said they are very satisfied with the procedures as managed by ANECA and that any issues raised concerning the content of final drafts of reports were almost always resolved without the need for a formal appeal. Representatives of HEIs interviewed confirmed that they are aware of the existence of the appeals procedures. The panel welcomed the fact that the complaints and appeals procedures form part of the documentation and guidance provided under each procedure and are, together with all other relevant information, published on the agency web site.

### **Panel commendation**

The panel commends the transparency of the Complaints and Appeals procedures and the definitive timeframe within which the agency undertakes to consider and determine the appeal. The panel considers this to be an example of good practice.

### **Panel conclusion: fully compliant**

# CONCLUSION

## SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

### ESG 3.1

The panel commends the agency on its willingness and ability to deliver change and improvements to its processes and procedures, in particular following the previous two external reviews and consideration of the outcomes of feedback following its activities.

### ESG 3.4

The panel commends the efforts made by the agency to analyse and comment on the value and activities taking place in higher education institutions.

### ESG 3.5

The panel commends the agency for its rigorous financial accounting procedures, for its dedication to staff development and support through appropriate training aimed at both professional and personal development, and for the systems in place that ensure all staff have access to relevant information to enable them to perform their duties

### ESG3.6

The panel commends the agency for the establishment of an internal unit with responsibility for quality assurance internally within the agency. The panel also commends the efforts of the agency to continuously review its procedures, to include the views of all stakeholders and to revise its procedures as necessary or deemed appropriate.

### ESG 3.7

The panel commends the positive and constructive approach of the agency to self-reflection and external review.

### ESG 2.1

The panel commended the successful efforts of the agency to support and make every effort to ensure the implementation of internal quality assurance in all institutions.

### ESG 2.4

The panel commends the procedure by which experts are sought, appointed and prepared for the evaluation procedures and the efforts of the agency to include experts from society as well as disciplinary experts and students, both national and international.

### ESG 2.6

The panel commends the efforts made by the agency to develop appropriate and useful, readable reports, in response to recommendations in previous reviews and to comments by stakeholders.

### ESG 2.7

The panel commends the transparency of the Complaints and Appeals procedures and the definitive timeframe within which the agency undertakes to consider and determine the appeal. The panel considers this to be an example of good practice.

## OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ESG 3.1 Activities, policy, and processes for quality assurance – fully compliant

ESG 3.2 Official status – fully compliant

ESG 3.3 Independence – fully compliant

ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis – substantially compliant

### Panel recommendation

The panel recommends that ANECA continues to analyse the data and information emerging from evaluations conducted and in particular the evaluation of programmes, and to expand the range of thematic reports published on the Spanish quality assurance system.

ESG 3.5 Resources – fully compliant

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct – fully compliant

### Panel recommendation

The panel recommends that an annual IQA report be published, primarily aimed at an internal readership and at developing an institutional memory of changes and developments.

ESG 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies – fully compliant

ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance – fully compliant

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose – fully compliant

ESG 2.3 Implementing processes – fully compliant

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts – fully compliant

### Panel recommendation

The panel would encourage the agency to continue and extend its efforts to include international experts in review panels.

ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes – fully compliant

ESG 2.6 Reporting – substantially compliant

### Panel recommendations

The panel recommends that the agency consider how best to include all the valuable information contained in the 'long' reports in the published reports.

ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals – fully compliant

In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, ANECA is in compliance with the ESG.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

The panel recommends that the agency consider the possibility of moving to an institutional evaluation based system for all procedures. The panel understands that this may require a change in legislation as well as other considerations, however the maturity of the present programme evaluation procedures is now well established and it may be appropriate to move to a more audit focussed approach in the future.

The panel recommends that the AUDIT programme continues to be developed and expanded and institutions encouraged to participate in it.



# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1: 2012 AND 2017 EXTERNAL REVIEWS: A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

| ENQA Criterion/ESG  | 2012 review   |  | 2017 review         |                   |
|---|---|--|---------------------|-------------------|
|   | Level of compliance                                       | Recommendation(s)  | Level of compliance | Recommendation(s) |
| <b>ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (FORMERLY ESG 2.1)</b>         | Substantially compliant                                   | <p>2.1</p> <p>ANECA should further consolidate the AUDIT Programme and should explore ways to ensure the commitment of all Spanish universities to this process.</p> <p>ANECA should continue with the development of the ACREDITA programme and aim to commence implementation of the programme in the near future.</p>   | Fully compliant     | None              |
| <b>ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE (FORMERLY ESG 2.2 AND ESG 2.4)</b> | <p>Substantially compliant</p> <p>Partially compliant</p> | <p>2.2</p> <p>ANECA should strengthen the systematic involvement of external stakeholders especially students, and at the early stages of any new development.</p> <p>ANECA should make more formally established and effective use of its Advisory Board.</p> <p>2.4</p> <p>ANECA should review its policy relating to the use of international experts within its processes, and seek to strengthen the recruitment of such experts.</p> <p>ANECA should consider, within the limitations of possible legal constraints, the inclusion of students in the membership of its assessment committees concerned with the accreditation of academic staff.</p> <p>ANECA should strengthen its dialogue and level of contact with institutions with a view to taking further the aspects of improvement and enhancement in its quality assurance activities.</p> | Fully compliant     | None              |

|  |  |  |                 |  |
|--|--|--|-----------------|--|
| <b>ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES<br/>(FORMERLY ESG 2.6 AND 3.7)</b> | Substantially compliant<br><br>Partially compliant | <p>2.6</p> <p>ANECA should establish a more active dialogue with the universities on the outcomes of its assessments and their contribution to the development of study programmes.</p> <p>3.7</p> <p>In general, wherever relevant and appropriate, ANECA should work to align its programmes and procedures more closely with the model outlined in this standard</p> <p>In developing the procedure for ACREDITA, ANECA should consider the inclusion of a self- evaluation and site visit element.</p>   | Fully compliant | None   |
| <b>ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS<br/>(FORMERLY ESG 3.7)</b>            | Partially compliant                                | <p>3.7</p> <p>In general, wherever relevant and appropriate, ANECA should work to align its programmes and procedures more closely with the model outlined in this standard</p> <p>In developing the procedure for ACREDITA, ANECA should consider the inclusion of a self- evaluation and site visit element.</p>   | Fully compliant | The panel would encourage the agency to continue and extend its efforts to include international experts in review panels. |
| <b>ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES<br/>(FORMERLY ESG 2.3 AND 3.7)</b>  | Substantially compliant<br><br>Partially compliant | <p>2.3</p> <p>ANECA should provide more detailed guidance for its committees relating to their decision- making processes.</p> <p>ANECA should have a clear policy on the involvement of ANECA staff in its assessment committees with a view to ensuring consistency of practice.</p> <p>3.7</p> <p>In general, wherever relevant and appropriate, ANECA should work to align its programmes and procedures more closely with the model outlined in this standard.</p> <p>In developing the procedure for ACREDITA, ANECA should consider the inclusion of a self- evaluation and site visit element.</p> | Fully compliant | None   |

|  |  |   |                         |  |
|--|--|---|-------------------------|--|
| <b>ESG 2.6 REPORTING (FORMERLY ESG 2.5)</b>  | Partially compliant                            | <p>2.5</p> <p>ANECA should seek to identify more clearly the needs of the intended readership of its reports.</p> <p>ANECA should evaluate its publication policies with a view to providing more information, and aim to publish reports as soon as they are completed.</p> <p>ANECA should publish more extensive and comprehensive reports relating to the AUDIT and DOCENTIA programmes.</p> <p>ANECA should consider publishing reports that contain more information on the criteria, the considerations of the committees and basis for the recommendations.</p> | Substantially compliant | The panel recommends that the agency consider how best to include all the valuable information contained in the 'long' reports in the published reports. |
| <b>ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS (FORMERLY ESG 2.7 AND 3.7 [GUIDELINE])</b>                       | Fully compliant<br><br>Partially compliant     | <p>3.7</p> <p>In general, wherever relevant and appropriate, ANECA should work to align its programmes and procedures more closely with the model outlined in this standard</p> <p>In developing the procedure for ACREDITA, ANECA should consider the inclusion of a self- evaluation and site visit element.</p>  | Fully compliant         | None   |
| <b>3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE (FORMERLY ESG 3.1, 3.3, AND 3.5)</b> | Fully compliant<br><br>Substantially compliant | <p>3.1 None</p> <p>3.3 None</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>ANECA should develop a clear medium term strategic plan deriving from its mission statement; this should include a risk analysis, and form the basis for the annual action plan.</p>  | Fully compliant         | None   |
| <b>3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS (FORMERLY ESG 3.2)</b>  | Fully compliant                                | 3.2 None  | Fully compliant         | None   |
| <b>3.3 INDEPENDENCE (FORMERLY ESG 3.6)</b>   | Substantially compliant                        | <p>3.6</p> <p>ANECA should reconsider the composition of the Board of Trustees with regard to ensuring both an appropriate level of independence and the representation of all stakeholders.</p> <p>It is again recommended that the appointment of a Chair of the</p>  | Fully compliant         | None   |

|   |                         |   |                         |  |
|---|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|--|
|   |                         | <p>Board of Trustees independent of the Ministry would support the expected level of autonomous responsibility.</p> <p>ANECA should ensure that the student representatives in the Board of Trustees are appointed by a representative body that has no formal or de facto external political involvement.</p>  |                         |  |
| <b>3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS (FORMERLY ESG 2.8)</b>                                   | Partially compliant     | <p>2.8</p> <p>Drawing on its programmes and their outcomes, ANECA should work to develop and publish system-wide analyses carefully selected according to explicit criteria.</p>  | Substantially compliant | The panel recommends that ANECA continues to analyse the data and information emerging from evaluations conducted and in particular the evaluation of programmes, and to expand the range of thematic reports published on the Spanish quality assurance system. |
| <b>3.5 RESOURCES (FORMERLY ESG 3.4)</b>   | Fully compliant         | <p>3.4</p> <p>ANECA should consider reintroducing some form of developmental appraisal in order to motivate and support its staff in their performance.</p> <p>ANECA needs to address the current budgetary constraints strategically and establish priorities with regard to the development of new processes and procedures.</p>                                  | Fully compliant         | None   |
| <b>3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT (FORMERLY ESG 3.8)</b> | Substantially compliant | <p>3.8</p> <p>ANECA should consider the introduction of a cross-agency process for the management of its internal quality assurance, and encourage a greater exchange of good practice across the Agency.</p> <p>ANECA should consider including external stakeholders more directly in the internal evaluation and quality improvement activity of the Agency.</p> | Fully compliant         | The panel recommends that an annual IQA report be published, primarily aimed at an internal readership and at developing an institutional memory of changes and developments.  |
| <b>3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES (FORMERLY ESG 3.8 [GUIDELINE])</b>    | Substantially compliant | <p>3.8</p> <p>ANECA should consider the introduction of a cross-agency process for the management of its internal quality assurance, and encourage a greater exchange of good practice across the Agency.</p> <p>ANECA should consider including external stakeholders more directly in the internal evaluation and quality improvement activity of the Agency.</p> | Fully compliant         | None   |

## ANNEX 2: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

| TUESDAY 06.06.2017                        |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 16.00 – 19.00                             | Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for day I<br>A pre-visit meeting with the agency contact person to clarify elements related to the overall system and context (if requested) |   |
| WEDNESDAY 07.06.2017                      |   |   |
| TIMING                                    | TOPIC   | PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW   |
| 09.00 – 09.15<br>(15 minutes)             | Review panel's private meeting  |   |
| 09.15 - 10.00<br>(45 minutes)<br>SESIÓN 1 | Meeting with representatives from the Senior Management Team.   | <b>José Arnáez.</b> Director.<br><b>M<sup>a</sup> Sol Serrano.</b> Manager.<br><b>Miguel Ángel Sastre Castillo.</b> Director of Programme Evaluation Division.<br><b>Álvaro Gutiérrez Berlinches.</b> Director of Academic Staff Evaluation Division.   |
| 10.00 – 10.15<br>(15 minutes)             | Review panel's private discussion   |   |
| 10.15 – 11.00<br>(45 minutes)<br>SESIÓN 2 | Meeting with the CEO and the chair of the Board (or equivalent)   | <b>Jorge Sainz.</b> Chair of Governing Council of ANECA.  |
| 11.15 – 11.30                             | Review panel's private discussion   |   |
| 11.30– 12.15<br>(45 minutes)<br>SESIÓN 3  | Meeting with the team responsible for preparation of the self-assessment report   | <b>Esther Balboa.</b> Head of Unit for Quality and Strategic Planification.<br><b>Ana Martín de Blas.</b> Officer of Unit for Quality and Strategic Planification.<br><b>Elvira Juárez.</b> Officer of DOCENTIA Programme.  |
| 12.15 – 12.30<br>(15 minutes)             | Review panel's private discussion   |   |
| 12.30 – 13.30<br>(60 minutes)<br>SESIÓN 4 | Meeting with key staff of the agency/staff in charge of evaluations<br>PROGRAMME EVALUATION   | <b>Maria Becerro.</b> Project Manager of ACREDITA PLUS Programme.<br><b>Enrique Vicario.</b> Project Manager of ACREDITA Programme.<br><b>Maria Alonso.</b> Project Manager of VERIFICA and MONITOR Programmes.<br><b>Marta Díaz.</b> Officer of ACREDITA Programme.<br><b>Juan José Sobrino.</b> Officer of ACREDITA PLUS Programme. |
| 13.30 – 14.30<br>(60 minutes)             | Lunch (panel only)  |   |
| 14.30 – 15.30<br>(60 minutes)<br>SESIÓN 5 | Meeting with department/key body of the agency 1<br>INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION, QUALITY AND STRATEGIC PLANIFICATION   | <b>Esther Balboa.</b> Head of Unit for Quality and Strategic Planification.<br><b>Jose Antonio Pérez.</b> Project Manager of AUDIT Programme.<br><b>José María Nyssen.</b> Project Manager of Studies and Reports.<br><b>Elvira Juárez.</b> Officer of DOCENTIA Programme.  |

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|---|--|--|
|   |  | <b>Ana Martín de Blas.</b> Officer of Unit for Quality and Strategic Planification.  |
| 15.30 – 15.45<br>(15 minutes)               | Review panel's private discussion  |  |
| 15.45 – 16.30<br>(45 minutes)<br>SESIÓN 6   | Meeting with department/key body of the agency 2<br>INTERNATIONAL APPROACH | <b>Rafael Llavori.</b> Head of Unit for Institutional, International Relations and Communications.<br><b>Nick Harris.</b> International Advisor.<br><b>Vanessa Duclos.</b> Officer of Unit for Institutional, International Relations and Communications.<br><b>Anabel Bonilla.</b> Officer of ACREDITA PLUS Programme.  |
| 16.30 - ...<br>As necessary                 | Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day II            |  |
| 19.30                                       | Dinner (panel only)  |  |
| <b>THURSDAY 8.06.2017</b>                   |  |  |
| <b>TIMING</b>                               |  | <b>PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW</b>   |
| 09.00                                       | Arrival at Agency<br>Brief private meeting of Panel                        |  |
| 09.15 – 10.00<br>(45 minutes)<br>SESSION 7  | Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool                      | <b>Jesús Santos del Cerro (UCLM).</b> Committee Member of VERIFICA-MONITOR.<br><b>Victoria Escribano (UZ).</b> Committee Member of ACREDITA.<br><b>Antonio Garrido del Solo (UCLM).</b> Committee Member of ACREDITA PLUS.<br><b>Carlos Arias (U. Sevilla).</b> Committee Member of AUDIT.<br><b>Luis Merino (UEX).</b> Committee Member of DOCENTIA.<br><b>Rosario García.</b> Professional reviewer (Via videoconference). |
| 10.00 – 10.15<br>(15 minutes)               | Review panel's private discussion  |  |
| 10.15 – 11.00<br>(45 minutes)<br>SESSION 8  | Meeting with representatives of stakeholders: students                     | <b>Ana Rosa Gómez Arroyo (UV).</b> Committee Member of VERIFICA-MONITOR.<br><b>Stefania Pineda (UCM).</b> Committee Member of ACREDITA.<br><b>Irene Martín Roca (UPM).</b> Committee Member of ACREDITA PLUS.<br><b>Belén Ribeiro Navarrete (UV).</b> Committee Member of AUDIT.   |
| 11.00 – 11.15<br>(15 minutes)               | Review panel's private discussion  |  |
| 11.15 – 12.00<br>(45 minutes)<br>SESSION 9  | Spanish Universities Council   | <b>Alfonso Carlosena.</b> Rector of Universidad Pública de Navarra, (public University).<br><b>Julio L. Martínez.</b> Rector of Universidad Pontificia de Comillas (private University).<br><b>Julio Luis Abalde.</b> Rector of Universidad de la Coruña (public University).  |
| 12.00 – 12.15<br>(15 minutes)               | Review panel's private discussion  |  |
| 12.15 – 13.00<br>(45 minutes)<br>SESSION 10 | Meeting with heads of some reviewed HEIs/HEI representatives               | <b>Alberto Garrido (UPM).</b> Vice-rector of public University.<br><b>Xavier Varona (UIB).</b> Vice-rector of public University.<br><b>Eduardo Vendrell (UPV).</b> Vice-rector of public University.   |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|   |  | <b>Pedro Serna (UNIR)</b> . Vice-rector of private University. <b>Ernesto Anabitarte (UNICAN)</b> . Vice-rector of public University.  |
| 13.00 – 14.00<br>(60 minutes)               | Lunch (panel only)   |  |
| 14.00 – 14.45<br>(45 minutes)<br>SESSION 11 | Meeting with quality assurance officers of HEIs  | <b>Juan F. Panduro (UEX)</b> . Director of quality assurance officer. Universidad de Extremadura.<br><b>Gracia Serrano</b> . Director of quality assurance officer. ESIC. Business & Marketing School.<br><b>Ignacio Hierro (UNIR)</b> . Director of quality assurance officer. Universidad Internacional de la Rioja.<br><b>Juan Pedro Montañés (UPCO)</b> . Director of quality assurance officer. Universidad Pontificia de Comillas.<br><b>F. Javier Monforte (UNIRIOJA)</b> . Director of quality assurance officer. Universidad de La Rioja. |
| 14.45 – 15.00<br>(15 minutes)               | Review panel's private discussion  |  |
| 15.00 – 15.45<br>(45 minutes)<br>SESSION 12 | Meeting with stakeholders: employer representatives, local community   | <b>Amable Breijo</b> . Deputy Director for Planning and Academic Policy – Ministry of Defence.<br><b>Miguel Ángel Acosta Rodríguez (UPGC)</b> . Representative from the Conference of the Stakeholders Councils of Spanish Public Universities.<br><b>Antonio Serrano González</b> . Director of ACPUA. Regional Agency.<br><b>Miguel Angel Fernandez Torroba</b> . Director-General of Education of one Region without Agency (La Rioja).   |
| 15.45 – 16.00<br>(15 minutes)               | Review panel's private discussion  |  |
| 16.00 – 16.30<br>(30 minutes)<br>SESSION 13 | Representatives from the Ministry of Education, Culture and sport, to clarify elements related to funding and legal issues | <b>Enrique Collell</b> . Representative from the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.<br><b>Luis Gallego Gallego</b> . Representative of the office of the Ministry for finance in charge of financial audit.   |
| 16:30 - .....<br>As necessary               | Wrap-up meeting among panel members: preparation for day III and provisional conclusions                                   |  |
| <b>Friday 09.06.2017</b>                    |  |  |
| <b>TIMING</b>                               | <b>[08.06.2017]</b>  | <b>PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW</b>   |
| 09.00                                       | Arrival at Agency  |  |
| 09.00 – 10.15<br>(30 minutes)               | Meeting with CEO to clarify any outstanding issues, if necessary   |  |
| 10.15 – 12.00<br>(105 minutes)              | Private meeting among panel members to agree on the main findings  |  |
| 12.00-12.30<br>(30 minutes)                 | Final de-briefing meeting with staff and Council/Board members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings          |  |
| 12.30 – 13.30<br>(60 minutes)               | Lunch (panel only)   |  |
|   | Final discussions of Panel and finalisation of arrangements for completion of the report of the Panel                      |  |
|   | Departure of Panel   |  |

## ANNEX 3: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

External review of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

### **Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

January 2017

#### **1. Background and Context**

The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA), is an autonomous body of the Ministry of Education of Spain whose aim is to provide external quality assurance for the Spanish Higher Education System and to contribute to its constant improvement.

ANECA has developed several Procedures (for the evaluation of institutions and programmes, as well as for academic staff) in order to perform its activities (evaluation, certification and accreditation), with the purpose of integrating the Spanish system into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA):

Programme evaluation:

- VERIFICA Procedure: Evaluation of degree proposals designed according to the aims set for building the EHEA.
- MONITOR Procedure: Follow-up of an ex-ante accredited programme until it has to be submitted again in order to renew its accreditation.
- ACREDITA Procedure: checks that the degree has been carried out according to the initial project.
- ACREDITA PLUS Procedure: Assessment for national accreditation and for International seals.

Institutional evaluation:

- AUDIT Procedure: Guidance for Higher Education Institutions to establish their own internal quality assurance systems and certifies the design and implementation of those systems.
- DOCENTIA Procedure: Support for Universities wishing to establish their own mechanisms to evaluate the quality of the teaching activity of their academic staff.
- Academic staff evaluation Procedures:
- PEP Procedure: (non-civil servant academic staff hiring) Evaluation of the teaching and research activities as well as the academic backgrounds of future applicants to positions of non-civil servant academic staff (PhD Lecturer , PhD assistant Lecturer , Non PhD assistant Lecturer and private universities Lecturer ) as defined by the LOMLOU.
- ACADEMIA Procedure: (national accreditation for civil servant academic staff): Evaluation of the applicants' qualification to access the civil-service positions as University academic staff (Senior Lecturer and Professor) at the national level.
- CNEAI. The evaluation of the individual research activity of academic staff of the Spanish higher education institutions, at the national level.

ANECA has been a full member of ENQA since 2007 and is applying for renewal of the ENQA membership.



Aneca was evaluated by ENQA in 2007 and in 2012. This is the third time ENQA evaluates ANECA according to the ESG.

ANECA has been registered on EQAR since May 2013, after being registered for the first time in December 2008 and June 2012 for the second time. This review will also be used for applying for renewal.

## 2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This review, will evaluate the way in which and to what extent ANECA fulfils the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether membership of ANECA should be reconfirmed and to EQAR to support ANECA application to the register.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting membership.

### 2.1 Activities of ANECA within the scope of the ESG

In order for ANECA to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all activities ANECA that are within the scope of the ESG, i.e. reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning (and their relevant links to research and innovation). This is regardless of whether these activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA, and whether they are obligatory or voluntary.

The following activities of ANECA have to be addressed in the external review:

- Programme approach – ex-ante, ex-post and monitoring of study programmes:
  - ✓ VERIFICA
  - ✓ MONITOR
  - ✓ ACREDITA
  - ✓ ACREDITA PLUS (EUR-ACE and EURO-INF)
- Institutional approach - reviews at institutional level:
  - ✓ AUDIT
  - ✓ DOCENTIA
- Institutional and programme accreditation procedures carried out by ANECA in Latin America (AUDIT and joint programme accreditation procedures (i.e. the award of the EUR-ACE engineering label).
- In the application form, ANECA stated that it did not consider *other national and international assessments* to be within the scope of the ESG. EQAR considered the information provided and came to the conclusion that some of these activities might be within the scope of the ESG as far as they concern the assessment of higher education institutions or study programmes (including joint programmes) in relation to teaching and learning in higher education, irrespective of whether these activities are carried out regularly or occasionally. The self-assessment report and the external panel's report should thus address whether that is the case and, if so, analyse compliance with the ESG in those assessments.

Therefore, the procedures dealing with the individual evaluation of academic staff candidates (ACADEMIA and PEP) as well as individual research activity (CNEAI procedure) will not be at the core of the activities subject to the review, and therefore explained in the self-assessment report. But they are mentioned in the ToR and in the introduction of the self-assessment report because they are included in both the official activities of the Agency and the budget.

### **3. The Review Process**

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in line with the requirements of the *EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-assessment by ANECA including the preparation of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to ANECA;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the ENQA Review Committee;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency, including a voluntary follow-up visit.

#### **3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members**

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts, an academic employed by a higher education institution, student member, and eventually a labour market representative (if requested). One of the members will serve as the chair of the review panel, and another member as a review secretary. For ENQA Agency Reviews at least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. An additional panel member may be included in the panel at the request of the agency under review. In this case an additional fee to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses is applied.

In addition to the four members, the panel will be supported by the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA expectations are met throughout the process. The ENQA staff member will not be the Secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide ANECA with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards ANECA review.

### **3.2 Self-assessment by ANECA, including the preparation of a self-assessment report**

ANECA is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-assessment report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a brief description of the national HE and QA system; background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis; each criterion (ESG part II and III) addressed individually. All agency's QA activities (whether within their national jurisdiction or outside of it, and whether obligatory or voluntary) will be described and their compliance with the ESG analysed.
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which ANECA fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG and thus the requirements of ENQA membership.
- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat who has 4 weeks to pre-scrutinise it before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but whether the necessary information, as stated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to reject the report and ask for a revised version within 4 weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 € will be charged to the agency.
- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of six weeks prior to the site visit.

### **3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel**

ANECA will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to ANECA at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by ANECA in arriving in Madrid, Spain.

The site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the major issues of the evaluation between the review panel and ANECA.

### **3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report**

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as

defined under articles 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ESG. A draft will be first submitted to the ENQA review coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity and language and it will be then submitted to ANECA within 11 weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If ANECA chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by ANECA, finalise the document and submit it to ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

When preparing the report, the review panel should also bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG*, so as to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR.

ANECA is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation applying for membership and the ways in which ANECA expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be discussed along with the final evaluation report.

#### **4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report**

ANECA will consider the expert panel's report and will publish it on its website once the ENQA Board has made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. ANECA commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting a follow-up report to the ENQA Board. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

The follow-up report will be complemented by a small-scale visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered as of particular importance or challenge by ANECA. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or compliance of the agency with the ESG. Should the agency not wish to take advantage of this opportunity, it may opt out by informing the ENQA Review Coordinator about this.

#### **5. Use of the report**

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether ANECA has met the ESG and can be thus admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. The report will also be used for registration on EQAR, and is designed so as to serve these two purposes. However, the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to ANECA and ENQA and until it is approved by the Board the report may not be used or relied upon by ANECA, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. ANECA may use the report at its discretion only after the Board has approved of the report. The approval of the report is independent of the decision on membership.

The Chair of the panel shall remain available to respond to questions of clarification or further information from the EQAR Register Committee provided that the ENQA Secretariat is copied in all such requests.

## 6. Budget

ANECA shall pay the following review related fees:

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Fee of the Chair                                | 4,500 EUR                  |
| Fee of the Secretary                            | 4,500 EUR                  |
| Fee of the 2 other panel members                | 4,000 EUR (2,000 EUR each) |
| Fee of 2 panel members for follow-up visit      | 1,000 EUR (500 EUR each)   |
| Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat    | 7,000 EUR                  |
| Experts Training fund                           | 1,400 EUR                  |
| Approximate travel and subsistence expenses     | 6,000 EUR                  |
| Travel and subsistence expenses follow-up visit | 1,600 EUR                  |

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR VAT excl. for a review team of 4 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, ANECA will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to ANECA if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

The fee of the follow-up visit is included in the overall cost of the review and will not be reimbursed in case the agency does not wish to benefit from it.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

## 7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Agreement on terms of reference  | November/January 2017    |
| Appointment of review panel members  | February 2017            |
| Self-assessment completed  | February 2017            |
| Pre-screening of SAR by ENQA coordinator   | March 2017               |
| Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable                        | April 2017               |
| Briefing of review panel members   | April/May 2017           |
| Review panel site visit  | Late May/Early June 2017 |
| Draft of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA coordinator for pre-screening | By the end of July 2017  |
| Draft of evaluation report to ANECA  | August 2017              |
| Statement of ANECA to review panel if necessary                                    | August 2017              |
| Submission of final report to ENQA   | September 2017           |
| Consideration of the report by ENQA Board and response of ANECA                    | October 2017             |
| Publication of the report  | October/November 2017    |

## ANNEX 4: GLOSSARY

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| ANECA | The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación) |
| CEI   | Commissions for Issuing Reports   |
| CGP   | Committee for Guarantees and Programmes   |
| CGPU  | General Conference on University Policy   |
| CRUE  | Rectors' Conference   |
| CU    | Council of Universities   |
| CURSA | The University Committee for Regulating Follow-up and Accreditation   |
| CV    | Curriculum Vitae  |
| ECTN  | European Chemistry Thematic Network   |
| EHEA  | European Higher Education Area  |
| ENAAE | European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education   |
| ENQA  | European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education  |
| ESG   | <i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015</i>                                   |
| EQAR  | European Quality Agency Register for Higher Education   |
| FP    | Advanced Vocational training  |
| HE    | Higher Education  |
| HEI   | Higher Education Institution  |
| IQA   | Internal Quality Assurance  |
| IT    | Information Technology  |
| MECD  | Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports   |
| MECES | Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education   |
| QA    | Quality Assurance   |
| REACU | Spanish Network for Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies   |
| RUCT  | Register of Universities, Higher Education Faculties/Schools and Degrees  |
| SAR   | Self-Assessment Report  |
| SE    | Self-evaluation   |
| SWOT  | Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats   |
| TOR   | Terms of Reference  |

## ANNEX 5. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

### DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY ANECA

Self-Assessment Report

Annexes (Eng.):

- Recommendations made by the ENQA experts and Board following the review in 2012, and their follow-up

Documents:

- Statutes of The "Foundation National Agency of Quality Assessment and Accreditation "
- Activity Reports 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007
- Strategic plan 2013-2016
- Annual Operational Plan 2016
- Reports about the status of Quality Assurance in Spanish Higher Education Institutions: 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007
- Report of ANECA to Spanish Universities Council - Assessment processes due to LO1MLOU
- Reports that have been submitted to the Board of Trustees of the Foundation (its governing body):
  - Report on the evaluation of official Bachelor and Master degrees before they are accredited ex-ante by the Spanish Universities Council
  - Report about national academic staff assessment to assess the civil servant bodies of academic staff
- Support Guide for drafting, implementing and evaluating LEARNING OUTCOMES
- The Report on different stakeholders' levels of satisfaction with regard to the activities conducted by ANECA: students and university social bodies' points of view
- Report on cross-border education and its quality assurance in Spain in the framework of the international project QACHE
- Universities and Rules on Permanence. Reflections for the future
- White Paper on the design of university degrees in the digital economy framework
- Report on Transitioning from the former Official University Degree Catalogue to the Register of Universities, Higher Education Colleges and Degrees (RUCT), and the adjustment between the supply and demand of places
- Universities and Rules on Permanence. Reflections for the future
- White Paper on the design of university degrees in the digital economy framework
- Report on Transitioning from the former Official University Degree Catalogue to the Register of Universities, Higher Education Colleges and Degrees (RUCT), and the adjustment between the supply and demand of places

#### **OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL**

Extensive supportive documentation available on the ANECA web site;

Supporting documentation available on ANECA intranet (Owncloud) site not available on the public web site;

The Report on different stakeholders' levels of satisfaction with regard to the activities conducted by ANECA: students and university social bodies' points of view;

The Report on cross-border education and its quality assurance in Spain in the framework of the international project QACHE; *Universities and Rules on Permanence. Reflections for the future*

- i. *White Paper on the design of university degrees in the digital economy framework.*
- ii. *Report on Transitioning from the former Official University Degree Catalogue to the Register of Universities, Higher Education Colleges and Degrees (RUCT), and the adjustment between the supply and demand of places.*
- iii. *Universities and Rules on Permanence. Reflections for the future.*
- iv. *White Paper on the design of university degrees in the digital economy framework.*
- v. *Report on Transitioning from the former Official University Degree Catalogue to the Register of Universities, Higher Education Colleges and Degrees (RUCT), and the adjustment between the supply and demand of places.*





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