

**FOLLOW-UP REPORT IN ACCORDANCE WITH EUROPEAN
STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN
HIGHER EDUCATION TWO YEARS AFTER THE EXTERNAL
REVIEW OF ACSUCYL**

(April 2017)

FOLLOW-UP REPORT IN ACCORDANCE WITH EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION TWO YEARS AFTER THE EXTERNAL REVIEW OF ACSUCYL

1. Introduction
2. General considerations
3. Current status and level of compliance with the recommendations for improvement made by the panel of experts
4. Current status and level of compliance with the recommendations for improvement made by the Board of ENQA
5. Evidence accessible on ACSUCYL's web and a database accrediting the information contained in the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

Two years after the external review to which the work of ACSUCYL was subject, in accordance with European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education, the Agency has been complying with the recommendations for improvement highlighted in the letter sent by the Board of ENQA and with the recommendations set out by the panel of experts in its evaluation report.

After analysing the extent to which said recommendations are being complied with, it may be concluded that ACSUCYL is working to address all the suggestions put forward and that the action already undertaken has enabled the Agency to improve the way it carries out its work.

Beyond the specific recommendations made, ACSUCYL continues to progress in an effort to offer higher education institutions the best possible service, always drawing on the ESG as the reference framework.

The present report describes the current status of the action taken to comply with the recommendations for improvement put forward. Where possible, links to the intranet or ACSUCYL's website have been provided so that, should it be deemed necessary, the evidence accrediting the action described in the report may be accessed. Nevertheless, taking into account the recommendation of the President of ENQA in his letter of 3 March 2017, an effort has been made to provide detailed information concerning compliance with the recommendations so as to facilitate the evaluation carried out by the Board members, thus avoiding, as far as possible, the need to resort to such evidence.

2. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to respond to the recommendations and to adjust to the new ESG (2015), the Agency has initiated a process of adapting its [organisational structure](#) and action which has recently been approved by ACSUCYL's Board of Directors.

The present document schematically reflects how the Agency's action and goals fit in with the new ESG and what response is given to the recommendations of the BOARD in each of the criteria pinpointed by the latter. In addition, a new organisational structure is included in which greater emphasis is placed on analysing the information, disseminating results and cooperating in creating the *area of studies and quality analysis*, an aspect also highlighted by ENQA in its review report.

Furthermore, the Agency's [quality policy](#) has been reviewed so as to render it fully compliant with the new European standards and guidelines.

Likewise, the Agency's [Annual Action Plan](#) has been reformulated and now specifies in greater detail each of the activities to be undertaken and the associated costs, together with the deadlines and stakeholders involved in each. This also provides evidence of how the recommendations made are being taken into account. Moreover, the [Agency's Internal Quality Assurance System goals](#) (SIGC) reflect the action to be taken year after year in order to respond to the recommendations.

On a different note, concern regarding the balance between the workload, the staff and the budget allocated to the Agency has been made more coherent, bearing in mind that the budget for 2016 increased and that in 2015 the section which was initially to be devoted to conducting periodic evaluation of University Research Institutes was used to carry out the renewal and accreditation process. Nevertheless, ACSUCYL is constantly urging the competent authorities to increase the budget allocated to the Agency and to staff so that it may have a wider-ranging structure which will enable new projects addressing strategic and qualitative aspects to be undertaken. In order to achieve this, the search is underway for external cooperation that will allow a range of projects to be embarked upon that will lead to improvements in the quality of the system and provide society with useful information.

Furthermore, within the framework of the SGIC and its ISO 9001 certification, job description profiles are being redefined in order to allow staff needs to be pinpointed so that the envisaged annual action plan may be carried out in full alignment with [ACSUCYL's mission and strategic plan](#).

3. CURRENT STATUS AND LEVEL OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT MADE BY THE PANEL OF EXPERTS WHO CONDUCTED THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

ESG 2.2: ACSUCYL should consider how universities in Castilla y León could be more actively involved in the design and development of new quality assurance processes.

This recommendation comes into line with ACSUCYL's 2014/2019 Strategic Plan: *Strategic Objective II.1 To foster cooperation with all stakeholders involved in higher education. It has also been taken into account in the Agency's SIGC objectives for 2015, 2016 and 2017.*

The Agency has taken this recommendation into consideration, and since ENQA's review has fostered the participation of universities in the region in designing and developing the new quality assessment processes that have been set up. They have thus been involved in designing the new assessment process for the follow-up and accreditation of the doctoral programmes that will be brought in this year. To achieve this, in 2016 and 2017 meetings have been held with the vice-rectors in charge of the doctoral programmes as well as academic officers at the technical quality units in the higher education system in Castilla y León (SUCYL). As a result of this cooperation, an evaluation guide has been drawn up detailing both the procedure as well as the assessment criteria for the follow-up and accreditation of doctoral programmes. In conjunction with universities, a pilot project has been scheduled to implement and test an assessment process in 2017. Furthermore, once the pilot project has concluded, another meeting will be held with all those in charge in order to conduct a metaevaluation and fine tune the process in those matters deemed necessary with a view to its application in 2018.

In addition, the Agency is working with those in charge of degrees at universities to agree on a calendar for carrying out the various assessment processes which degrees taught at universities in the region must undergo. Work will also commence on designing the process to certify the internal quality assurance systems of university centres, an essential requirement when seeking to apply for institutional accreditation of centres, an alternative and more efficient formula for renewing degree accreditation, and which is in line with the demands of the European Higher Education Area. Said process is possible thanks to the publication, on 29 May 2015, of Decree 420/2015 regulating institutional accreditation of centres as an alternative to the degree accreditation model currently in place.

In order to implement this change in the model, and as set out in said Decree, the protocol established by the General Conference on University Policy, dependent on the Spanish Education Ministry, must be taken into account, a protocol which is yet to be approved. Only when the bases have been established by this body will the Agency be able to make further progress with universities in drawing up the specific assessment procedure to be carried out at SUCYL. Meanwhile, however, at REACU (Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies) where all the quality assurance agencies in higher education in Spain are represented, a proposal has already been drawn up and sent to those in charge at the Ministry of Education. Said proposal is already being examined by CURSA (University Committee for Regulating and Follow-up of Accreditation), which is made up of five university quality assurance agency directors, one of which is ACSUCYL, representatives of the education authorities, in which Castilla y León is also involved, as well as rectors from various Spanish universities. All of this clearly reflects ACSUCYL's involvement in the whole process as well as the proactive nature of the Agency and the work it has been carrying out to encourage the involvement of universities in designing new assessment processes.

Furthermore, not only are universities being involved in designing new processes but also in reviewing existing ones, as has been the case for many years. Since 2015, they have been involved in updating the process for renewal of accreditation of official degrees which has been revised, amongst other matters, to commence adaptation to the new European standards and guidelines approved in 2015.

ESG 2.4: *The Agency should remain vigilant to ensure that ex-post degree programme accreditations are carried out in accordance with established European best practices regarding the time spent per programme, the size and profile of the expert team, etc, so as to ensure an appropriate level of analysis.*

During 2015 and 2016 the process has been carried out for renewal of accreditation of official university bachelor's and master's degrees; specifically of 133 degrees in 2015 and 117 in 2016. The stages involved in the assessment process for each degree were as follows:

1. *Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Knowledge Area:* the Agency assigns the degree to the corresponding Area Committee. All of the documentation submitted by the degree is reviewed by members of said Area Committee, specifically by two scholars, one professional from the world of business and one student, all of whom are linked to the degree's area of knowledge.

3. *Visit by an external committee* to the centre where each of the degrees being evaluated is taught. In order to optimise resources, visits are normally organised so that they coincide for all the degrees being taught at a single centre, although the visit to each degree is conducted individually as are the interviews with each group.

The visiting committee normally comprises four members, two academics (one of whom is always a scholar from the committee of experts carrying out the individual evaluation), one student and one professional (both of whom have also previously evaluated the file). All of them belong to the area committee to which the degree has been assigned. In addition, the visiting committee is accompanied by a senior technical officer from the Agency who is in charge of coordinating the process and supporting the committee.

During each visit, a number of interviews with different stakeholders involved in the degree are held: academic officers at the university where the degree is taught, the academic tutor of the degree, teaching staff, students currently taking the degree, graduates who have taken the degree, employers and, where applicable, tutors in charge of placements. The interview with each of the groups lasts between 45 minutes and one and a half hours. Since 2014, the time devoted has been extended, and it has been seen over these last two years that it is sufficient time to extract and compare the information required to complete the evaluation.

Moreover, any person involved in the degree or who has any interest is ensured of being able to provide information thereon. For this purpose, the webpages of the Agency and of the universities have set up a mailbox called "open audience", publicity for which is given and to which any kind of information may be sent. Said information is then analysed and taken into consideration for evaluation when deemed appropriate.

4. *Report proposal from the knowledge area committee.* Once all the documents and information provided by the visiting committee have been reviewed concerning said visit, the area committee issues a report proposal which is sent to the Degree Assessment Committee for revision.

5. *Report proposal issued.* Once the area committee's proposal has been reviewed, the assessment commission issues a report proposal to the university and allows them 20 days to present whatever arguments they deem appropriate.

6. *Arguments.* Once the university has put forward its arguments, the assessment committee reviews them and submits a final report proposal to the assessment commission.

7. *Final assessment report.* The assessment commission reviews the final report proposal issued by the area committee and sends the final report for renewal of accreditation to the university and the education authorities.

The university may contest the final decision on renewal of accreditation, in which case the assessment decision is reviewed by the Agency's Appeals Committee.

In all, the assessment process lasts nine months, which is considered sufficient to ensure that degrees are evaluated comprehensively. In all instances, said period is established in the legislation applicable at national level, such that under no circumstances may ACSUCYL exceed this limit.

All of this information concerning the various stages involved in the process may also be consulted in the [Guide to evaluation for renewal of accreditation of official bachelor's and master's degrees.](#)

All of the above aims to clarify that the procedure undertaken is sustainable for both the Agency and universities alike, and that the stages of the process, the time taken in conducting the whole evaluation and in particular the visits to each degree, the profile and number of evaluators involved in the evaluation of each degree, meet both European as well as national requirements. It also ensures that the evaluation is carried out performing a thorough and comprehensive analysis of both the documentation presented and in terms of the information provided during the visits.

ESG 2.4: *The agency should be proactive in initiating a debate at the regional and national level in order to consider the global fitness for purpose of the Spanish EQA system as well as the opportunity of a shift to institutional or audit reviews.*

As highlighted in point 2.2., ACSUCYL is working proactively to initiate a debate at national and regional level to ensure that external quality assurance processes are fit for purpose in each case, putting forward new institutional accreditation processes to achieve said goal.

Regular weekly meetings are currently being held with the regional ministry responsible for university and research matters at the regional government so as to establish fluent communication that will enable the Agency's activities to be coordinated with educational policy, such that the processes carried out prove fit for purpose. In addition, the Agency is actively involved in a number of different actions aimed at fostering quality assurance in the higher education system.

One clear example of this is ACSUCYL's involvement in the seminar held last March 31 in Segovia addressing *Urgent Reform in the Spanish Higher Education System*. The main aim of the seminar was to analyse the Spanish higher education system today. Twenty-nine renowned experts from the area of higher education took part, including academic officers from Spanish universities, senior education authority officials, representatives from legislative chambers who may develop a new legal framework, and professionals from the world of universities.

In addition, the Agency is involved in the regular meetings held at CURSA which, as already pointed out, are also attended by the Ministry of Education, regional education authorities, Spanish universities and quality assurance agencies in higher education. These meetings are

propitiating ACSUCYL's influence in the design of external quality assurance procedures at a national scale as well as legislative reform so as to adapt quality assurance processes to the purpose for which they were designed. Through CURSA, work is currently being carried out on amending Royal Decree 1393/2007 which governs the organisation of official courses. Likewise, work is also being done on designing the protocol, as mentioned earlier, which will enable universities to opt for a model of institutional accreditation, the most widely used model in Europe, thus avoiding the current accreditation by programmes.

At the same time, ACSUCYL is working closely with universities to gain an insight into the challenges and possible problems which this change in model may entail.

Moreover, the Agency is commencing work with another two Spanish agencies (Cataluña and Aragón) on a pilot experience to design a benchmarking system to allow self-evaluation of degrees taught at universities. Said project is still in its infancy but does reflect the Agency's proactive approach towards designing systems that support institutions' independence and accountability, in turn, providing them with the tools to ensure the quality of their programmes.

ESG 2.8: *The agency should consider involving stakeholders in a discussion about what sort of system-wide analysis is needed at the Castilla y León level and is feasible under the agency's current economic circumstances and whether more work in this area can be done on a national scale.*

In response to this recommendation, ACSUCYL is working with its Advisory Board, which is made up of social representatives and experts with a range of different profiles, all of which are linked to higher education. These are competent and renowned professionals from the academic, scientific and business world who are experienced in management and quality assessment processes at universities both nationally and internationally.

The first issue concerns pinpointing topics which may be of interest for society at large and the higher education system in Castilla y León (SUCYL) in particular, and on which an analysis may be carried out taking into account the information available to the Agency, universities and other bodies able to provide information which may prove interesting to the higher education system (the CyL Research Commission, the CyL University Foundation, the CyL Economic and Social Council, etc.). Moreover, given the present focus of ESG in this regard, work is being carried out on how to exploit the outcomes to emerge from the evaluation conducted by ACSUCYL so that they may provide food for thought vis-à-vis policies and quality assurance processes and help improve them at both a national and international scale.

Work is also being done along similar lines with the Agency's Student Board, positing possible areas of study that might prove to be of interest to the university community.

Given the Agency's limited budget and resources for undertaking such studies, cooperation is being sought with various public bodies, including those mentioned above. Work is also underway internally in an effort to streamline procedures and to exploit results by drawing up regular reports on the impact of the evaluations carried out by the Agency (*SGIC 2017 Objectives*). This action is also reflected in [ACSUCYL's 2014/2019 Strategic Plan](#), *Strategic Objective 1.1. Analysing the higher education system. Operational objective: Providing society with useful information concerning the quality of higher education so as to facilitate decision making*, as well as in the Agency's *Annual Action Plan for 2017*.

ESG 3.4: *ACSUCYL should carefully consider the coherence between the financial resources available and the fitness for purpose of the current ex-post programme accreditation scheme.*

As pointed out earlier, the current situation vis-à-vis external quality assurance processes is changing from a costly model of evaluation of accreditation by programmes to a more efficient model of evaluation of institutional accreditation. Said change is in fact the result of the high

cost of allocating the resources required by the present model both for universities and for the agencies, as recognised in the preamble to Royal Decree 420/2015 when it states that:

“The current model of accreditation of courses was defined on extremely protective bases of the degrees introduced, in a three-stage process: ex-ante verification or accreditation, follow-up of the degrees introduced and renewal of accreditation after six years in the case of bachelor’s degrees and four years in the case of master’s degrees.

This three-stage process places the emphasis on the «academic protection» of the authorised degree after its verification and on the follow-up of its introduction so as to reduce risks to a minimum in renewal of introduction.

*It is therefore a costly process for the universities and agencies who must undertake the subsequent assessment procedures. Coupled with the high number of degrees submitted by universities for verification and introduction, with the prior mandatory authorisation of regional governments for degrees in public universities, this **highlights the need to seek more efficient formulas as alternatives to the current model, and which come into line with the demands of the European Higher Education Area and the trends in other European higher education systems which includes an institutional dimension in the accreditation process.**”*

In any event, while this change of model is being brought into effect, ACSUCYL’s 2015 budget line for the evaluation of renewal of accreditation of official degrees was increased. This proved possible by reorganising the Agency’s resources (given that the periodic evaluation of University Research Institutes was regrouped and part of the budget line was allocated to the process of renewal of accreditation). Furthermore, there has been a redistribution of the duties assigned to some of the Agency’s senior technical officers, with duties related to the renewal of accreditation evaluation being assigned to a further two members of staff.

In addition, after analysing the costs involved in the renewal of accreditation process in 2015, the need to increase the financial resources allocated to the Agency for 2016 was put to the regional ministry responsible for university affairs¹. This led to a substantial increase of 23.58% in the available budget, as reflected in the following table.

	2014	2015	2016
ACSUCYL GENERAL BUDGET	1 007,653.00	1 006,653.00	1 243,975.00
ALLOCATED TO RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION	114,895.72 (11.4%) (57 degrees)	294,369.63 (29.24%) (133 degrees)	206,845.00 ² (117 degree)

In this way, ACSUCYL is ensuring that the process for renewal of accreditation is conducted in an economically sustainable manner.

¹ The final budget for 2017 has not yet been approved (April 2017), and depends on the Spanish government approving the national budget, and the Regional Government of Castilla y León approving the regional budget. This situation leads to the current budget being extended which, in principle, means that the Agency will have the same budget for 2017 as it had for 2016, until such time as the final budget is approved.

² This amount refers to the budget line allocated to files for renewal of accreditation in 2016/2017. Given that the evaluation process for the renewal of accreditation began in September 2016 and lasts nine months, it is still underway, such that it is impossible to say the exact amount invested. The cost of organising the meetings of the assessment committees who must examine the arguments put forward by universities contesting the report proposals remains pending, as does the cost of the meeting of the assessment commission who issue the final reports, together with expenses arising from reviewing any possible appeals against the final assessment decisions. The amount shown is up to 15 April 2017.

In addition, the Agency has also increased its revenue thanks to the fees approved by the Board of Directors for carrying out whatever evaluations may be requested of it by universities (evaluation of teaching staff research results, evaluation of universities' own calls for teaching staff contracts, evaluation for official recognition of research groups, evaluation of competitive projects, etc.) as well as from other agents who provide revenue through the evaluations requested, such as the CyL University Foundation for whom an evaluation is conducted of the quality assurance systems in place for artistic education courses, or SACYL (the regional health authority) for whom an evaluation is being carried out of research projects in health.

The Agency is aware that the general economic situation in Spain and Castilla y León has affected both the Agency's financial as well as its human resources but, at the same time, that this has in no way impacted on the quality of the work done thanks to the strong commitment of the staff and the efficient management of available resources. One example of this is the internal [organisational re-structuring](#) undertaken last month as well as the search for cooperation in an effort to respond to all the tasks required of ACSUCYL.

ESG 3.8: *ACSUCYL should pursue its efforts to strengthen student involvement. Specifically, the specific role of the newly created Student Committee should be clarified, as well as their actual capacity to provide useful feedback for the agency.*

This recommendation is in line with the objectives set out by the Agency as part of its Strategic Plan for 2014/2019: *Strategic Objective II. 1: To promote student involvement in quality assurance processes: To consolidate the role of ACSUCYL's Student Committee.* It is also included in the *SIGC Objectives 2015/2016/2017 and in the 2017 Action Plan.*

Over the last two years, an effort has been made to secure greater involvement on the part of the Agency's Student Committee. A number of invitations to participate have been launched, although these have not proved as successful as might have been hoped. To a large extent, this has been because it was difficult for members to organise meetings and thus give continuity to their work, since the students held temporary representative posts at their universities which, on occasions, only lasted a very short time.

As a result, given the need to strengthen student involvement so that ACSUCYL is provided with useful information, the [Internal Rules of Procedure](#) have recently been amended such that the committee is now made up of students who hold more stable representative posts. The functions and duties have also been updated as has the actual name, this having been changed from the Student Committee to the **Student Board**, thus stressing its advisory capacity. It is hoped these changes will lead to greater student involvement.

As stipulated in the new rules, the revised composition of ACSUCYL's *Student Board will be chaired by the Director of ACSUCYL and will have one representative from each university in the higher education system in Castilla y León (SUCYL) who will hold the post of student representative on the Social Council or equivalent body at their university. The Board will have a Secretary, who will have the right to speak and vote, and who will be a senior technical officer in quality programmes at ACSUCYL.*

These student representatives on the Social Councils of the universities, who now form part of ACSUCYL's Student Board, are highly active students in university life and whose appointment is longer lasting, such that they are able to provide the Agency with interesting and relevant information.

Article 2 of the above-mentioned rules of procedure envisages the creation of ACSUCYL's Student Board aimed at **promoting student involvement in the analysis and improvement of the activities carried out by** the Quality Assurance Agency for the University System in Castilla y León (ACSUCYL), and which is charged with the following tasks:

- a) Channelling the suggestions, comments and opinions of students concerning the quality of higher education.
- b) Gathering suggestions concerning the activities carried out by ACSUCYL so as to help improve the service provided by the Agency.
- c) Issuing whatever reports or analyses may be requested and, particularly, advising the Agency on projects which have a direct impact on students.
- d) Aiding the dissemination of ACSUCYL's activities amongst the university student population.
- e) Cooperating in fostering student involvement in quality assurance activities in universities.

In order to revitalise the Student Board, in May 2017 the Agency aims to request the involvement of university rectors in an effort to encourage the participation of their university student representatives and to solicit from the students themselves topics of interest to be dealt with by the Board: an awareness of the Agency's activities, involvement in the assessment committees, better channels of communication between students and the Agency, proposals for improvements in the assessment procedures so as to better reflect the student perspective, possible studies to be carried out by the Agency which might be of interest to them, etc.

The Agency thus aims to gather students' opinions in May and June 2017. Based on these, a document will be drawn up containing the students' views and proposals regarding the Agency and which will be discussed at a meeting of the Student Board around October 2017.

The Agency is aware of the importance of this aspect and of the need to improve it, and is making every effort to secure greater student involvement through said body. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that this is not the only channel ACSUCYL employs to gain student participation, since students are also present in the Agency's activities through their involvement in the various assessment committees, both in conducting the evaluation as well as in drawing up the protocols and their metaevaluation. Said participation, as equal members, provides an extremely valuable contribution to the evaluations since the perspective of the main *users* of higher education is thus mirrored in the Agency's procedures.

Criterion 8: *The agency should consider revising its appeals procedure so a separate committee handles this process and not the commission that is responsible for running the review processes.*

Following this recommendation, ACSUCYL has set up an Appeals Committee whose main objective is to familiarise itself with, evaluate, and report on the appeals filed against the final assessment decisions issued by the Agency. Said committee is made up of five experts, from each of the areas of knowledge, who have experience in the various assessment processes carried out by the Agency (degree assessment, teaching staff assessment and evaluation of research), yet who are not connected with the assessment commissions, which are the bodies responsible for evaluating the various files.

All of its members belong to universities outside Castilla y León, thereby ensuring independence and objectivity in their work. The Appeals Committee is currently made up of:

Fidel Corcuera Mansó (President)
Guillermo Martínez Massanet (Secretary)
Antonio Campos Muñoz (Academic Member)
Manuel Rebollo Puig (Academic Member)
Teresa Riesgo Alcaide (Academic Member)

The functioning of the committee is set out in the ["Rules of procedure for the internal functioning of the Appeals Committee"](#).

Article 2 of the above-mentioned rules details the general functions of the Appeals Committee, which are the following:

- a) *To examine the appeals filed against unfavourable reports issued in the various assessment programmes.*
- b) *To write reports on said appeals and to submit them to the respective assessment commissions.*
- c) *To inform the Director of the Agency of its activities and of any agreements adopted.*
- d) *Any other function which, within the scope of its activities, may be required of it.*

Following on from these functions, last 10 January the committee met for the first time at the Agency's premises in order to examine the appeals lodged against the final decisions taken in the renewal of accreditation process and which were given an unfavourable evaluation, issued by ACSUCYL in May 2016, as well as against an unfavourable report issued by the Agency during the process for the amendment of official degrees. The committee reviewed and issued reports on a total of 16 appeals.

The recommendation put forward by the panel of experts and by the Board of ENQA that any appeals submitted against the assessment decisions taken should be reviewed by a body other than the one responsible for conducting the assessment process has thus been complied with.

Despite only having recently been set up, this body has already commenced work on reviewing its internal rules of procedure in order to define its action as an appeals body. The idea is for the committee not only to report on any appeals filed with the Agency against the assessment decisions issued but also to deal with any grievances put forward concerning the procedures carried out by ACSUCYL. Said task will also lead to a change in its name, with said committee now becoming known as the Guarantees Committee. This has also been sparked by the Agency's desire to adapt to the new European standards and guidelines which, as highlighted in the introduction to this report, ACSUCYL is currently working on. This action is also set out in the [2017 Action Plan](#) and in [the Agency's SIGC Objectives for 2017](#).

4. STATUS OF THE PROGRESS AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS PUT FORWARD BY THE BOARD OF ENQA.

ENQA Criterion 3 – Resources (ESG 3.4)

ENQA Criterion 6 – External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the members (ESG 3.7)

The Board acknowledges that ACSUCYL handled the budget cuts very well, maintaining the quality and professionalism of the agency's work, as well as the motivation of staff. However, the budgetary and resource constraints placed on the Agency raise questions about its ability to conduct developmental work or to take on new activity. The introduction of 161 new ex-post accreditation procedures in 2015 will be highly challenging, on top of existing activity. This will continue in 2016 with a further 156 procedures planned.

The Board concurs with the Panel in recommending the Agency to “*work on influencing regional and national legislation in order to make sure tasks and resources are aligned*” and to “*consider ways to ensure that the many tasks related to the substantial number of planned ex-post accreditation procedures do not threaten the agency's quality standards and allow for the implementation of ex-post accreditation procedures with high standards*”.

The Board would like to see how the Agency has coped with this additional work in the follow-up report.

See **ESG 2.4 and 3.4**. Current status of the progress and compliance with recommendations for improvement put forward by the panel of experts.

ENQA Criterion 7 – Accountability procedures (ESG 3.8)

The Agency is encouraged to:

- give a stronger focus to external quality assurance on strategic and qualitative aspects rather than on “technical” procedures and processes;

In response to this recommendation, and in accordance with the tasks assigned to it in its procedural rules, ACSUCYL’s Board of Directors has recently approved the [Adaptation of the Agency’s organisational structure and action](#) as well as various specific actions in this regard in its [Annual Action Plan](#) for 2017.

The **Studies and Quality Analysis Unit** has been set up to coordinate and promote the more strategic and qualitative projects in an effort to provide valuable information to aid in decision making and to provide useful information to society. The projects which it is hoped will be undertaken in the short/medium term, and which are set out in the 2017 Annual Action Plan, include:

- Publication of reports on the outcomes of the quality assessment procedures carried out by ACSUCYL.
- Analysis of the research structures of the higher education system in Castilla y León and,
- Analysis of job placement factors of graduates in the higher education system in Castilla y León

- through strategic discussions with stakeholders from Castilla y León on EQA and further involve students through the newly formed Student Committee.

See **ESG 2.4, 2.8 and 3.8**. Current status of the progress and compliance with recommendations for improvement put forward by the panel of experts.

ENQA Criterion 8ii: Miscellaneous

It is advisable, as recommended by the panel, that the appeals procedure is handled by a separate body which is not responsible for running the review processes.

See **Criterion 8**: Current status of the progress and compliance with recommendations for improvement put forward by the panel of experts.

5. DOCUMENTS ACCESSIBLE ON ACSUCYL'S WEB AND A DATABASE ACCREDITING INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE REPORT.

1. Quality policy
2. Adaptation of the Agency's organisational structure and action
3. Annual action programme for 2017.
4. ACSUCYL's 2014/2019 Strategic Plan
5. Goals of the 2017 internal quality assurance system
6. Evaluation guide for renewal of accreditation of official bachelor's and master's degrees.
7. Rules of procedure for the internal functioning of the Student Board
8. Rules of procedure for the internal functioning of the Appeals Committee

Access to the database:

<http://seguimiento2.acsucyl.com/alfresco/webdav/Espacios%20personales/enqa>

Login: enqa

Password: enqa3541