



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Dr. Javier Oliver Villarroya
Director General
Valencian Agency for Assessment and Forecasting (AVAP)
Plaza del Ayuntamiento 6, 4º & 5º
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Spain

Brussels, 1 July 2022

Subject: Membership of AVAP in ENQA

Dear Dr. Javier Oliver Villarroya,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 22 June 2022, the Board of ENQA took the decision to grant the AVAP membership of ENQA for five years from that date. The Board concluded that AVAP is in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and thus fulfils the membership criteria according to article 6, paragraph 1 of ENQA's rules of procedure.

The Board would like to use this opportunity and draw the agency's attention to standard 3.3 Independence, where the panel listed several critical recommendations related to the agency's operational and organisational independence, and independence of formal outcomes. The Board asks the agency to address the listed recommendations urgently and strengthen the agency's overall independence within the higher education and quality assurance system of Valencia.

Secondly, regarding ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts and ESG 3.5 Resources, the review report notes a concerning practice of student involvement in external quality assurance. The Board urges the agency to reconsider the role of student members in expert groups moving away from their responsibility for administrative issues; and to introduce student members in all assessment procedures currently implemented or to be implemented by AVAP.

Regarding ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals, the Board notes that several aspects of the standard require further attention by the agency, such as the need to establish a permanent appeals committee and a procedure for complaints that is different from the appeals procedure, and to reconsider the function of the current Guarantee's Commission in the light of new procedures for complaints and appeals.

All in all, the external review identifies several areas that require immediate attention of the agency, such as panel recommendations related to ESG 3.3, 3.4, 2.4, and 2.7. The Board strongly encourages the agency to provide sufficient attention to these recommendations and implement them. Should this not be addressed, the agency's compliance with the ESG and the linked membership with ENQA might be put at risk.

The Board would like to receive a follow-up report with a detailed overview of the progress on the points raised above, as well as an elaboration on how the agency considered the panel's recommendations overall, within two years of its decision, i.e., by June 2024.

The Board also encourages AVAP to take advantage of the voluntary progress visit – an enhancement-led feature in the review process. The visit would take place in about two years' time from this decision. The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with you in about a year's time to discuss this possibility. The costs of this visit have already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable except for the travel costs of the experts. More information about the progress visit can be found in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Please accept my congratulations for the confirmation of membership of AVAP.

Yours sincerely,



Douglas Blackstock
President

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel, AVAP is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

The review panel recommends that the agency ensures that student members are actually represented in all decision-making bodies and that the full composition of each decision-making body is properly reflected on the AVAP website.

ESG 3.3 Independence

The panel recommends the agency to engage in a discussion with the Regional Government about the current state of organisational independence with a view to reduce the dominant role of the Government representatives in its governance notably the Executive Committee.

The panel recommends the agency to revise the appointment procedure of the Director by the SC, in order to prove formal independence from the Regional government.

The panel recommends the agency to approve Rules of Procedure for each managing and decision-making body that would regulate the decision-making procedure and formally ensure that it is consistent and fully independent

The panel recommends the agency to develop and publish clear selection principles and application procedure for composing its collegial decision-making bodies, for example, the Accreditation Commission.

ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis

The review panel recommends the agency to strengthen its activities in REACU's joint thematic analyses by contributing AVAP's own reports and communicating their outcomes to AVAP's stakeholders.

The review panel recommends the agency to (re)start thematic analyses at the regional level, to involve regional stakeholders in identifying relevant topics and to communicate the outcomes to them.

The review panel recommends the agency to consider potentials of integrating thematic analyses and foresight activities.

ESG 3.5 Resources

The review panel recommends the agency to establish an internal staff development scheme that focuses on knowledge, skills and competences specific to the activities of AVAP rather than general professional development opportunities provided to civil servants. This scheme should include an induction scheme.

The review panel recommends the agency to carefully analyse the overall staff workload and responsibilities in comparison with the other quality assurance agencies and take relevant actions in order to make sure that AVAP can properly perform all its functions.

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

The review panel recommends the agency to develop a Quality Handbook that would be linked to the principles set by the Quality Policy, describe the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in AVAP's activities and define AVAP's internal indicators for quality and mechanisms for their monitoring.

The review panel recommends the agency to conduct workshops and training activities for its staff and stakeholders on a regular basis.

The review panel recommends the agency to systemize the feedback received during evaluation procedures through establishing an immediate follow-up procedure after every evaluation in order to assess their quality and suggest ways to improve it.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

The review panel recommends the agency to take an active position in developing its assessment methodologies with genuine involvement from stakeholders, in particular, the higher education institutions, and following the strategic priorities set for the education policy in the Valencian region.

The review panel recommends the agency to develop an internal procedure that would allow them to discuss the methodologies for the assessment of degrees, the guidelines and protocols internally and externally, through a transparent procedure.

The review panel recommends the agency to include questions related to assessment methodologies in its surveys to the higher education institutions and experts involved in assessment processes and to use the feedback for improvement of its methodologies.

The review panel recommends the agency to ensure full representation of its stakeholders in the establishment of the Committee of methodologies, protocols and appointments.

ESG 2.3 Implementing processes

The review panel recommends the agency to establish a site visit for authorization of new study programmes and foresee specific cases when site visit would be applicable in study programme follow-up procedure.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

The review panel recommends the agency to develop a consistent training strategy that would foresee a possibility for a regular training for all evaluators and a specific training for evaluators engaged in assessment procedures.

The review panel recommends the agency urgently to reconsider the role of student members in expert groups – specifically, to remove the responsibility for administrative issues and redistribute the overall responsibilities for assessing the criteria.

The review panel recommends the introduction of student members in all assessment procedures currently implemented or to be implemented by the agency.

ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

The review panel recommends the agency to develop and publish written bylaws on the decision-making process for different decision-making bodies, particularly describing the process of changing the findings of expert teams.

The review panel recommends the agency to offer mandatory training to all incoming members of their decision-making bodies and to offer possibilities for continuous professional development to all members of decision-making bodies, possibly in cooperation with other quality assurance agencies in Spain.

ESG 2.6 Reporting

The review panel recommends that the agency publishes the reports produced by the external experts alongside clearly documented changes that are made by the decision-making body.

ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals

The review panel recommends the agency to establish a permanent appeals committee that would review appeals on the formal outcome of all assessment procedures implemented by AVAP.

The review panel recommends the agency to establish a procedure for complaints that is different from the appeals and has clear instructions for the users defined.



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The review panel recommends the agency to reconsider the function of the current Guarantee's Commission in the light of new procedures for complaints and appeals.