

# Follow up Report

ENQA coordinated external review

Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d

March 2022



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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In February 2020, the Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d, madri+d, renewed its full ENQA membership for a period of five years, following an external review process conducted in 2019 by a panel of independent experts.

In addition to the recommendations for improvement expressed by the Evaluation Panel, the ENQA Board included its own considerations along with madri+d's full membership reconfirmation letter.

The external evaluation report also ensured the Foundation's maintained its listing in the EQAR Register for a period of 5 years. The EQAR Register Committee made its own specific comments on ESG compliance based on the content of the report and the document "Use and Interpretation of the ESG for the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies".

This follow up report provides information on the implementation of improvements based on the recommendations of the external evaluation report, the considerations of the ENQA Board and those of the EQAR Registration Committee.

Section 2 of this document provides a point-by-point response to the recommendations included in the evaluation report.

Section 3 provides information on the work done on the suggestions for improvement received.

Section 4 provides feed-back on a comment made by the EQAR Register Committee.

### 1.1 Context analysis 2020-2022

The years 2020 and 2021 have been marked by the COVID-19 health crisis that has affected all economic, employment and personal activity, in all sectors, in all regions and in all areas of the world.

It has been a challenge for madri+d to provide an adequate answer to the challenges caused by this situation.

In relation to the management of the pandemic from the point of view of the organisation of the work and staff management, the following measures were implemented:

- Effective implementation of teleworking. The Foundation's administrative processes were already sufficiently digitised for a rapid adaptation to 100% teleworking, as was the case during the period of mandatory confinement and its de-escalation period. The remote access system to the Foundation's servers was reinforced and all staff were provided with portable computer equipment.
- Adaptation of madri+d premises to maintain the established safety distance, air purification equipment, disinfection equipment, installation of screens, access register, etc.
- Reinforcement of health prevention measures for all staff, when on-site activity has been resumed, such as testing, availability of face mask, etc.
- Reinforcement of communication tools and strategies, with the aim of collecting and distributing information to workers, creating an atmosphere of transparency, encouraging teamwork, addressing difficulties in handling the workload and attending to the proposals and needs of each worker.

Regarding the Higher Education Quality Assurance Area, the previous digitalisation of all the processes has made it fairly easy to transfer them to teleworking, both for the Foundation's staff and for the evaluators involved, avoiding scheduled trips. All visits and evaluation activities were moved online, establishing and improving internal operation protocols, implementing videoconferencing tools, online collaboration tools, and providing all internal staff and external experts with training and support for the new procedures.

In this health crisis, madri+d has been demanded to make a considerable effort to support the Madrid Higher Education system without abandoning its usual responsibilities. This effort has been shared with all the universities, the National and Regional Ministries with competencies in Higher Education and the rest of the Spanish university quality assurance agencies.

It has to be highlighted that in 2020 madri+d took over the secretariat of the Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies, REACU, coordinating the response of agencies in order to establish regulations and publish recommendations for the critical aspects affecting the maintenance of quality in Higher Education. Several joint communications, recommendation documents, coordination meetings with all concerned stakeholders have been issued to provide guidance and support to the entire university community.

## 2 RECOMMENDATION SET IN THE EVALUATION REPORT

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### 2.1 ESG 3.4.- The panel recommends that the agency conducts more thematic analysis and focus on smaller areas instead of big ones so that it can be useful.

madri+d has established the elaboration of thematic analyses useful for the universities as one of its priority areas for improvement during last years. An area responsible has been appointed and economic resources have been allocated to successfully accomplish the task. Furthermore, several topics of interest have been identified to carry out analysis on a regular basis.

The epidemic of SARS-CoV2 and the resulting health emergency meant that all university programmes of the universities of Madrid had to be urgently adapted to an absolutely exceptional situation. This led to a readjustment of the priorities of all the Foundation's activities.

In the academic field, all face-to-face activity was suspended in March 2020. They were resumed during the academic year 2020-2021 subject to strong health restrictions on premises capacity and social distance that conditioned the delivery of the more than 1,200 university official degrees taught in our region.

The Fundación para el Conocimiento madri+d considered it necessary and very useful for the higher education system to know how this adaptation had been carried out, what resources the universities had at their disposal, what limitations they had encountered and, above all, what lessons could be learned from it all.

The outcome is set out in the report 'Good teaching practices in the COVID-19 period', an analysis carried out by a group of experts representing almost all the universities in Madrid, 14 in total, coordinated by the madri+d.

The study has analysed the public information on 1200 degrees, studied a sample of 230 of them in depth and carried out approximately one hundred interviews with more than 600 people, including teachers, programme managers, administrative and service staff, students, etc.

The report is structured in 6 categories of analysis: Theoretical Training Activities, Practical Training Activities, Internships, Assessment Systems, Information and Transparency and Reinforcement of Distance Learning. For each of the six categories the report presents global results and in deep analysis of 14 fields of knowledge, differentiating, where appropriate, the data obtained from teaching staff and students.

The report had a public presentation event on 28 October 2021. In addition to the dissemination achieved with this event, the publication made through the LinkedIn network accumulated up to 12,000 views.

The executive report, the full report and the video presentation can be found at

<https://www.madrimasd.org/calidad-universitaria/publicaciones/informe-buenas-practicas-docentes-en-periodo-covid-19>

Also, during these two years, a study on the Map of Degrees Offered by Public and Private Universities in the Region of Madrid has been carried out. It has been commissioned by madri+d to the Fundación Europea Sociedad y Educación. This study analyses the evolution and current

situation of the programmes offered, their demand and connection with employment. It is structured according to different parameters, such as the public or private condition of the university, the different branches of knowledge of the degrees or the qualification level .

Once that the study focused on the impact of COVID-19 on the performance of the degrees has been completed, madri+d has initiated a new study focused on the results of the quality assurance processes. Specifically, with regard to the Accreditation Renewal. Even before the pandemic broke out, madri+d already scheduled a study on the outcomes of the process of Accreditation Renewal. During the year 2021 the Spanish government renewed the legislation that regulates the organisation of official degrees in Spain. Royal Decree 1393/2007 was substituted by the Royal Decree 822/2021, of September 28, which establishes the organisation of university education and the procedure for quality assurance. This makes necessary and an opportunity to reflect on the results of a regulation that is now being replaced.

Taking advantage of the change of regulations, the initiated work will continue, and the report is expected to be published in 2022. The results will analyse in detail, quantitatively and qualitatively, the results of around one thousand programmes. The results will analyse the functioning of the Madrid university system under the replaced regulation, Royal Decree 1393/2007, highlighting the contribution to the improvement of the university system of this first regulation that regulates the quality assessment processes aligned with the Bologna process.

Further analysis on the implemented quality assurance processes are planned for the coming months, as well as on the evolution of the perception of all quality processes by the main actors involved.

## 2.2 ESG 3.4.- The panel recommends that the agency publishes reports of thematic analysis every year.

*NOTE from EQAR Register Committee.*

*The panel specifically recommended that the agency "publishes reports of thematic analysis every year". While the standard requires that such analyses be published "regularly", it does not impose a specific cycle.*

*The Register Committee therefore underlined that this recommendation should rather be considered a suggestion.*

As mentioned in the previous section (see 2.1), madri+d has reinforced its activity in the elaboration and publication of thematic analysis useful for universities and the higher education system.

Although the health situation has been a challenge for the agency, and has altered the scheduling and execution of thematic analysis studies, the objective remains to publish studies, with different scope and subject matter on an annual basis, as set out in the recommendation.

Regarding the thematic study completed in 2021, a specific section has been created on our website where all the information is available in open, full report, executive report in navigable version and different audiovisual elements:

<https://www.madrimasd.org/calidad-universitaria/publicaciones/informe-buenas-practicas-docentes-en-periodo-covid-19>

### 2.3 ESG 2.7 The panel recommends the agency to establish and publish a protocol for complaints that is different from appeals with clear instructions for the users.

As stated in the panel's evaluation report, the Foundation has formal mechanisms in place to address allegations and complaints about the evaluation processes.

Up to now, the management of complaints had not been formalised in a specific procedure. A new procedure ("PM07 COMPLAINTS, SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENDS MANAGEMENT") has been drafted to establish a regular channel for receiving, analysing and responding to this type of communications from external users.

An online form and the explanation of the procedure will be available on the Foundation's website in the coming weeks.

## 3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

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### 3.1 ESG 3.1.- The panel suggests including more international experts as members of panels, committees and governing bodies of the agency. They will bring valuable experience and knowledge to quality assurance in Madrid and will help the plans of the agency for internationalisation.

Despite the complexity of the last two years, madri+d has established contacts with international organisations to collaborate in the field of quality assurance in higher education, including the training of international evaluators and the incorporation of the Foundation's evaluation bodies.

Among these collaborations, the following are worth mentioning:

- the agreement signed with the Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos, OEI, and RIACES to collaborate in the Kalos Virtual accreditation for distance learning degrees, on 21 July 2021.
- the agreement with the Consejo Superior de Educación (CES) of Ecuador for the development of joint actions in the field of quality assurance in higher education, signed on 9 March 2021.
- the agreement signed with the Consejo de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior of Ecuador, CACES, to collaborate in quality assurance matters and training of external reviewers, signed on 15 March 2021.

One of the actions in which this latest agreement has taken shape is the delivery of the Peer Reviewer Training Course on 14 and 15 July 2021, addressed to Ecuador reviewers.

### 3.2 ESG 3.1.- The panel suggests including students in all its governing bodies and engaging new students through the Council of Students and Student Unions. Students should also be more thoroughly included in developing the content of the long-term strategic documents.

madri+d finds very valuable this suggestion. As the evaluation report itself states, the students are part of the main governing body of the Foundation, its Board of Trustees, and of all the evaluation and decision-making bodies.

The only body of the Foundation, which has advisor functions but no governing powers, is the Advisory Council, in which the participation of a representative of the Madrid Interuniversity Students Council is being considered, but not yet implemented.

Contact has been established with the Coordinator of Student Representatives of Public Universities, CREUP, in order to increase collaboration in the field of quality assurance, which has led to a joint analysis of the new university quality regulations that have been developed in 2021, in order to propose mutually agreed improvements, and a regular line of communication and collaboration is maintained in diverse lines.

### 3.3 ESG 3.6.- The panel suggests that the agency systematizes feedback through its evaluation application so that it becomes routinized.

As stated in the evaluation report, the SICAM computer system collects part of the feedback from the processes, specifically with regard to the assessment of the work of the experts by the other members of the panels, differentiated by roles. Just when the file of an evaluation is finished, a survey is sent to the participants. The survey has questions on satisfaction in a scale of 1-3, and the possibility of introducing qualitative comments.

In order to systematise the feedback, madri+d has chosen to do it through the annual meta-evaluation of all processes, using an online surveys system aimed at all stakeholders. Metaevaluation is based on blocks of stable questions, but which allow flexibility to introduce incremental improvements in the survey process, incorporating specific questions. This solution allows systematising feedback also for evaluation processes that are not managed through the SICAM tool.

With this system, meta-evaluation surveys have been carried out for 2019 and 2020 for the processes of Verification and Modification of Official Degrees, Special and Ordinary Monitoring of Official Degrees, Accreditation Renewal of Official Degrees, SISCAL madri+d certification and DOCENTIA evaluation.

These surveys provide information on 26 aspects related to the management of the assessment process, the criteria and guidelines of each of the models, the quality of the reports issued, the perceived utility of the process and general satisfaction with madri+d, as well as collecting suggestions and comments for each of the blocks. All surveys are addressed to the evaluators of the different evaluation bodies, the responsible of the universities' technical quality units and the coordinators of the degrees and centres evaluated.

The information collected is made available to the responsible to coordinate each of the quality assurance process so that it can be used as input data in the updates each model and guideline, as well as the improvement of shared elements.

### 3.4 ESG 2.2.- The panel suggests that the agency formally involves national/regional student unions in consultation processes, when developing and improving methodologies.

madri+d has established contacts with the main association representing students in Spain the Coordinator of Student Representatives of Public Universities, CREUP, to enhance collaboration in all tasks related to quality assurance in higher education.

The renewal of the regulations governing academic organisation in Spain, which has been led to the approval of Royal Decrees 640/2021 and 822/2021, as well as in the future Law on Universities has required the participation of all stakeholders. This has raised communication and collaboration lines with CREUP at well as with other stakeholders.

This collaboration lines have been also useful to establish a regular collaboration in terms of student participation in the evaluation processes of madri+d, through joint student training actions with CREUP.

Furthermore, regular student participation mechanisms of madri+d continue to be applied routinely, through working groups, advisory bodies, and the reviewer training activities in which students participate several times a year.

### 3.5 ESG 2.4.- The panel suggests that the agency increases the number of professional practitioners in their evaluation panels to add practical dimensions to the assessment processes.

Since the external evaluation, steps have been taken to increase the participation of professionals in the Foundation's evaluation bodies, with special emphasis on those degrees that grant professional competences.

The participation of at least one professional member in the Branch Committees that carry out the ex-ante Verification of degrees has been reinforced, in particular in the committees for Science, Engineering and Architecture, Health Sciences and Social and Legal Sciences.

In the Monitoring process that has been implemented in the last two years, different professionals have been incorporated depending on the specific subject of the degrees. In this case a professional participates in the Monitoring Evaluation Panel for the humanities branch. And more professional practitioners will participate in the coming years.

Furthermore, in the area of Health, a non-binding report has been requested from the competent professional associations to reinforce the quality assurance of the degrees and their link to the professional performance of graduates.

### 3.6 ESG 2.4.- The panel suggests that the agency increases the number of foreign experts in their evaluation panels to add international dimensions to the assessment processes.

This suggestion is in line with the one made on ESG criterion 3.1, and the progress made is explained in section 3.1 of this report.

### 3.7 ESG 2.4.- The panel suggests that the agency increases the number of experts from outside the región of Madrid in processes of verification and monitoring.

The regular renewal of the members of the evaluation bodies, including the Verification and Monitoring commissions, the criterion of having a greater participation of evaluators from outside the Madrid university system has been taken into account. At present moment, 54 of the 77 members of the Verification commissions (70%) and 23 of the 38 members of the Monitoring evaluation panels (61%) do not belong to universities in Madrid.

madríd keeps on working in order to increase the number of experts from outside the Madrid system and also from outside the Spanish system in the coming months.

### 3.8 ESG 2.4.-The panel suggests that the agency publishes the criteria and procedures used to select evaluators for assessment activities on its website.

madríd has a section on its website to receive experts applications.

<https://www.madrimsd.org/universidades/evaluacion-acreditacion-verificacion/banco-evaluadores>

This section has information about the basic criteria for participation in the evaluation processes and the requirements to be fulfilled depending on the profile (academic, student, professional or quality expert).

The criteria that appear on this page are generic and common to any expert, since there is a single, common register used for all evaluation processes.

As each evaluation process requires different characteristics of the evaluators, appointment procedures and working methodologies, the specific selection criteria and procedures, as referred to on the website itself, are set out in the guides that regulate each of the assessment processes. These guides are public and accessible through the different subsections of each assessment process on the website:

<https://www.madrimsd.org/calidad-universitaria/evaluacion-acreditacion-verificacion>

In relation to the management of evaluators, the registration form has been updated and improved in 2020, and in 2021 it has been linked to a web management tool (<https://evaluadores.madrimsd.org>), which allows each user to access and update the its data.

This new tool also improves the management capacities, the filtering of information and various search options in order to help configure the evaluation teams in an agile way.

### 3.9 ESG 2.4.- The panel suggests that the agency improves the selection of student experts through collaboration with Student Unions in such a way that selection and training are done on a regular basis (yearly or every two years).

#### *NOTE from ENQA Board*

*The Board would like to use this opportunity to provide an articulation regarding standard 2.4 Peer-review experts, where their judgement differs from that of the panel. The Board seconds the critical remark of the panel that the criteria and procedures used to select evaluators for assessment activities of the agency should be published and therefore accessible to the agency's stakeholders. Moreover, the Board believes that the agency should improve the processes of engaging student experts, including their selection and training. Following this, in the opinion of the Board, the standard can be considered only as substantially compliant with the ESG.*

As mentioned in the previous sections (see 3.2 and 3.4), the Foundation maintains regular communication with all stakeholders, especially with the main student associations.

In particular of collaboration with CREUP has two main action lines:

1. Participation of madri+d staff in the student stages organised periodically by CREUP.
2. Specific, periodical training actions of madri+d, aimed at students previously trained by and selected at CREUP, focused on madri+d procedures, in order to easily integrate these students into the Foundation's evaluation bodies.

Other participation mechanisms continue to be routinely applied, through working groups, advisory bodies, and training activities for experts - including students - in which students participate several times a year.

### 3.10 ESG 2.5.- The panel suggests that the agency work with universities on thematic analyses focused on the application of criteria to continue to ensure consistency.

The status of thematic reporting has been detailed in previous sections of this report (see 2.1 and 2.2).

As mentioned, the report 'Good teaching practices in the COVID-19 period' was published in 2021, with the collaboration of all the universities in Madrid, both in the collection of information and in the analysis and final drafting of the report. The involvement of all institutions is considered a key point to focus the content of the report on improving the system and also as a mean to achieve greater dissemination and impact in the university community and public administrations.

The Map of Degrees Offered by Public and Private Universities in the Region of Madrid was finished in July 2021. It was commissioned by madri+d to the Fundación Europea Sociedad y

Educación, which is an institution whose work is arranged with the participation of experts from different Spanish universities.

The next report, which topic is the results of the Accreditation Renewal process, will also include the participation of university representatives.

### 3.11 ESG 2.6.- The panel suggests the agency that the final reports issued by committees be formally approved by review panels to further reinforce the transparency of the process.

The suggestion made by the panel is very valued. The communication between the commissions and the visit panels working on the different evaluation processes has been reinforced. When the final reports are issued, all the experts who have participated in the process are informed so that they can be aware of the changes made and, in case of disagreement, they can report it.

Regardless this communication mechanism, madri+d's procedures clearly differentiate the functions and responsibilities of each of the bodies involved, and it is clearly established that the Commission is responsible for issuing the reports, although this is done on the basis of the documentation provided by the panel, which includes the visiting report. The rationale behind this is that the Commission must standardise criteria and also review the drafting of the reports in the light of an independent reader and adjust them when it deems it necessary. This requires that it has the autonomy to modify the reports, even though its judgement may sometimes differ from that of the visit panel members.

## 4 OTHER COMMENTS FROM EQAR TO THE EVALUATION REPORT

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### 4.1 ESG 3.6.-

*The EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG notes that a registered agency should demonstrate how it ensures ESG compliance of the parts of the work performed by another agency where it makes a decision based on that agency's report (see interpretations 26 & 27).*

*Given madri+d arrangements to take into account the results of international accreditations, the Register Committee had requested that the self-evaluation report and external review report address how the agency ensures ESG compliance where that agency is not registered on EQAR (e.g. ABET or NAAB).*

*Since the review report commented on the matter only briefly, the Register Committee sought additional clarification from the review panel. 29. The panel pointed out that it was "assured by the agency that the same criteria and guidelines were applied". The panel noted it had discussed the issue with the madri+d Accreditation Commission, which "confirmed its focus on being assured that meeting the ESG standards are a key focus of such accreditations".*

*The external review report and the panel's clarification did not refer to any evidence or further details to support this assurance. The Register Committee noted that at least two actual cases (accreditation based on ABET accreditation, <https://data.deqar.eu/report/8971/> and <https://data.deqar.eu/report/9129/>) raised concerns insofar as the ABET reports, forming the basis for these decisions, are not published as required in ESG 2.6.*

*The rather generic statements, combined with these two examples, did not demonstrate sufficiently how ESG compliance is assured for reports by other, non-registered agencies. The Register Committee was therefore unable to concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered that madri+d only partially complied with standard 3.6.*

The comment made by the EQAR Committee is taken into account in order to demonstrate ESG compliance in all madri+d's activities in future external evaluations or any other report that may be requested.