

Martí Casadesús Fa
Director
Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya)
Carrer dels Vergos, 36-42, 2a planta
08017 Barcelona, Spain

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Subject: AQU Catalunya's feedback on ENQA's review process

Dear Mr. Casadesús Fa,

On 14 September 2017, AQU Catalunya sent a letter to ENQA following the receipt of the final external review report in June 2017 expressing a number of critical reflections on the review. After a preliminary discussion at the ENQA Board meeting of 25 October 2017, I had a meeting with the leadership of AQU Catalunya on 20 November 2017, during which AQU Catalunya's considerations and concerns were discussed in detail. The ENQA Board then discussed AQU Catalunya's feedback during its meeting of 6 December 2017.

With this letter, I would like to inform you about the outcomes of the ENQA Board's discussion and the actions upon which the ENQA Board has decided to pursue as a follow up:

- **Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews**

Regarding the procedural rule that the judgements on compliance are omitted when the draft report is submitted to the agency for comments on factual accuracy and grave misunderstandings (p. 21), to ensure full transparency, the Board decided that henceforth the full draft report, including judgements on compliance for each standard of the ESG Parts 2 and 3, will be sent to the agency. The Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews will be modified accordingly.

- **Scrutiny procedure**

The ENQA Board decided to revise the scrutiny procedure in order to make it more robust and to ensure greater consistency: should the Review Committee's judgments deviate from those of the review panel in light of the evidence provided in the report, and should the Board agree with the Review Committee, the review panel will be consulted for clarifications before a decision on membership is taken. In addition, in the decision letter sent to the agency, the Board may express their difference of opinion from that of the panel and state the reasons in both cases – if the Board consider some of the panel's judgements to be overly strict or overly lenient in light of the evidence brought forward.

- **Role of the ENQA Board**

The ENQA Board examined and confirmed its role in the decision making concerning ENQA membership. According to the ENQA Rules of Procedure, the Board *“takes a decision in light of the available evidence gathered in the external review report on the agency’s compliance with the ESG”* (Article 8, § 6). In other words, the Board does not endorse the judgements of the review panel for each ESG standard, as the panel’s function is to provide an expert opinion to support the Board in their decision making.

- **Status of the review panel’s assessments**

The ENQA Board revised and confirmed the status of the review panel’s assessments. Members of the review panel are experts in a review process providing information for decision-making bodies such as the ENQA Board (membership) and EQAR Register Committee (registration). As such, the experts do not take a decision (appealable) but provide expert opinions to underpin a decision. From this follows that appealing against the review panels’ judgements is not possible, as this would undermine the review panels’ roles as experts in the review process.

In the light of the modifications and adaptations of the review process, the ENQA Board decided to analyse the scrutiny of AQU Catalunya’s review report and to provide the result regarding the specific standards of the ESG in a separate letter, should there be a difference of opinion from that of the panel. This letter will be published on the ENQA website together with the final review report as well as the Board’s initial decision.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to bring your concerns to our attention. Your feedback, both your letter of 14 September 2017 and the comprehensive documentation of 20 November 2017, have provided us with valuable insights to improve our services as a membership organisation.

If you have any further queries arising from the above, please do not hesitate to contact me or the ENQA Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,



Christoph Grolimund
President