
Luis Sánchez Álvarez
Chief Executive Officer
Fundación para el Conocimiento Madrimasd (FCM)
Velázquez 76
28001 Madrid
Spain

Dublin, 18 March 2015

Subject: External review of FCM and decision on membership

Dear Mr. Sánchez Álvarez,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 6 March 2015, the Board of ENQA agreed to grant FCM Full membership of ENQA for five years from that date.

On the basis of its scrutiny of the final review report, the Board agreed that FCM met the necessary requirements for being granted ENQA Membership.

Though the ENQA Board concluded that FCM is in substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines, the Board would like to receive a follow-up report within two years of the decision, i.e. by March 2017. The report should be based on the recommendations in the review report (as outlined in the attached annex).

Please accept my congratulations to FCM for the positive review outcome and I look forward to a fruitful future cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Padraig Walsh
President of ENQA

Annex: Areas for development

ANNEX: AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the panel's recommendations listed in the review report, the Board would like to receive clarifications in the follow-up report on the following issues:

ENQA Criterion 1– Activities (ESG 3.1, 3.3)

ESG 2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures

On page 12, the report reads that *"the foundation plans to accept the decisions of international accreditation agencies with which it has cooperation agreements as replacement for its own accreditation decisions"*.

International accreditation agencies with which FCM cooperates are not ENQA members or registered in EQAR and have thus not demonstrated compliance with the ESG. It is therefore of utmost importance that, as stated by the panel, the Foundation conducts a thorough preliminary analysis and formalises in a written document the conformity of the international accreditors' frameworks with both the Spanish assessment frameworks and the ESG Part 1 before accepting accreditation decisions from these bodies. This written document should provide assurance that the ESG are respected in the accreditation process and should notably provide information on essential features, such as the publication of reports, the follow-up mechanism, appeals procedure, etc. It is advisable that the Agency takes part in the accreditation processes to ensure that the Spanish and European frameworks are applied.

→ The Board would like to receive clarifications on the conditions upon which the Foundation will accept the accreditation outcomes by international accreditors.

ESG 2.5 Reporting

The Board noted in the panel's report that *"in the accreditation renewal processes, three different panels or committees are involved consecutively before issuing the final report. [...] this system bears some risks. As reports are adapted by committee members who have not been involved in the peer review itself, errors could be introduced during the process. The panel therefore suggests that the Foundation involve the panel members in the feedback procedure and has the final report checked by the review panel before the Evaluation and Accreditation Committee finally publishes the report"*.

Furthermore, the panel deliberation leading to the conclusions should be made explicit in all reports. Efforts should also be made to improve accessibility of reports.

As mentioned earlier under ESG 2.1, the conditions of publication of reports issued by international accreditors should be clearly stated in a written document.

→ The Agency is advised to promptly address these weaknesses as the revised ESG will be more challenging in terms of reporting.

ESG 2.6 Follow-up procedures

The Board noted the criticism expressed by the panel on the way the follow-up procedure is conducted: *"The panel is not convinced that the external quality assurance procedures as they are designed do guarantee that areas for improvement are dealt with speedily. Lack of follow-up ensuing accreditation renewal is the review panel's major area of concern"*.

→ The Board supports the panel recommendation in this regard. In addition, the Board would like to receive further information as to the panel's statement that the focus within the monitoring process is more on mere implementation of the verification report and improvement measures rather than on quality. In particular, is it due to the legal framework? Also, the Board would like to receive clarification as to how the Agency intends to ensure the follow-up in case of accepting accreditation decisions by other bodies (see comment above under ESG 2.1).

ENQA Criterion 3 – Resources (ESG 3.4)

On page 26 the report reads that *"from 2015 on, most programmes will need accreditation renewal. This will lead to a strong growth of the work load with consequent increased expense. The Regional Minister of Education has promised an increase in the budget for the assessment and accreditation activities of the Foundation for 2015."*

→ The Board would appreciate receiving further information as to how much the budget will be increased by the regional government and about the Agency's planning of activities for the coming years.

ENQA Criterion 5 – Independence (ESG 3.6)

The Board notes the greater independence of higher education institutions. However, the Board shares the panel's concern about *the "important role the Government plays in the composition of the Board of Trustees and the funding of the Foundation"*.

→ The Agency is encouraged to reconsider the appointment procedure of the Board of Trustees so as to achieve better formal independence from the government. Also, in order to achieve an even more balanced composition of the Board of Trustees, FCM may consider involving students as well. As for the role and missions of the Board of Trustees, they should be stated in a written document which should clearly mention that the Board of Trustees cannot influence the results of the evaluation and accreditation processes. The Board could not find such information in the review report. This is probably included in the Articles of the Foundation, but they seem not to be published in the website of FCM.