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Dublin, 26 July 2016

Subject: Membership of ACPUA in ENQA

Dear Dr. González,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 15 June 2016, the Board of ENQA agreed to grant ACPUA Membership of ENQA for five years from that date.

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

Though the ENQA Board concluded that ACPUA is in substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the Board would like to receive a follow-up report on the recommendations in the panel report (as outlined in the attached annex) within two years of its decision, i.e. by June 2018.

In addition, the Board recommends that ACPUA agrees to the new ENQA procedure which is the organisation of a progress visit. The visit would take place after the submission of the follow-up report in about two years' time. The aim of the meeting is not to monitor progress concerning different standards but rather to have an enhancement-led approach and discuss the challenges and benefits of the review. The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with ACPUA in about a year's time to discuss the possible organisation of this visit.

In the case of a first review of an agency, as in your case, it is strongly recommended that the visit is organised. The costs of this visit have already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable except for the travel budget of the experts.

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

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

Yours sincerely,



Padraig Walsh
President of ENQA

Annex: Areas for development

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

3.1.

The agency is recommended to further increase the stakeholder participation in its work, mainly through involving representatives of the labour market and society in evaluation panels and committees, wherever deemed relevant.

3.4.

The agency is encouraged to sustain its efforts for different thematic analysis and to allocate resources to these activities as these may contribute to enhance the relevance and legitimacy of its role in promoting awareness and informed policies about quality assurance.

3.5.

The agency is recommended to reflect about the necessary resources in the light of longer term achievement of strategic goals and the expansion of activities. Hence, the panel recommends that the agency tries to anticipate the impact of those activities on staff, not only in terms of staffing levels but also with regard to the need for staff development and training in order to manage transition effectively.

Also in relation to resources, it is recommended that the agency considers the impact of the achievement of strategic goals on current activities and processes to ensure that it can adapt to work with possibly a larger number of stakeholders and also to the requirements of systems outside Aragon and Spain.

3.6.

It is recommended that the agency strengthens its collaboration with other agencies to consolidate its achievements and to foster a continuous awareness about possible limitations, areas of improvements, and necessary changes.

2.1.

It is recommended that the agency continues to work with the university system to further develop the relationship between standard 2.1 and the development of effective internal quality assurance processes at institutional level. Among the possible areas for further attention, the following ones are highlighted:

- Strengthen the coherence of different evaluation procedures;
- More schools and educational centres should be encouraged to strengthen their internal quality systems through external reviews such as the AUDIT;
- More attention should be given to student centred learning and assessment practices;

2.2.

The agency is encouraged to pursue its efforts to explore the possibilities of adapting procedures to the size and priorities of the regional higher education system. This will benefit as well from deepening the involvement of external stakeholders in designing and assessing existing and future quality assurance mechanisms.

2.3.

The agency should reflect on the possibility of involving stakeholders other than those from universities in oversight committees for evaluation processes.

2.4.

The agency should consider involving representatives from employers and broader society in expert panels. This would assist the Agency in developing thematic reviews and in meeting society's demands and expectations for information. It is furthermore recommended that ACPUA reviews the selection mechanism of international experts, in order to facilitate the participation of international experts in review panels.

2.6

The agency should remain vigilant to the need for consistency in the production of reports, especially in view of the expected growth in the number of type of activities.

2.7

It is recommended that the agency pays attention to the actual implementation of the mechanism of appeals and its adequacy and effectiveness, namely regarding the time for processes to be analysed, and the formal and substantive fairness attained. The agency is encouraged to promote as far as possible the use of the internal appeal procedures before external judicial procedures can be started, for the sake of speed and greater collaboration with higher education institutions.