

External Review of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System (ACSUG) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

3 December 2008

1. Background and Context

The *Axencia para a Calidade do Sistema Universitario de Galicia* (Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System, ACSUG) was legally established on 30 January 2001 as a consortium between the Regional Government of Galicia and the three Galician universities. ACSUG was founded in order for the university system of Galicia to attain high levels of prestige and recognition among Spanish, European and international universities. The objectives of the agency include evaluating the Galician University System, analysing its results, and proposing quality improvement measures in the services provided by the public universities of Galicia, especially in the areas of teaching, research, management, services and the evaluation of lecturers. ACSUG creates a framework for co-operation and co-ordination between the Government, Galician universities and other higher education and quality assessment bodies, both in Spain and abroad, to exchange opinions, debate and join forces.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This is a type B review, as defined in the Guidelines for national reviews of ENQA member agencies. It will evaluate the way in which and to what extent ACSUG fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether ACSUG Full Membership in ENQA should be granted. The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards the granting of ACSUG's Full Membership in ENQA.

In addition to the European context, the review also aims at providing feedback on ACSUG's role and tasks in the contexts of the Galician and Spanish higher education systems. ACSUG's teaching staff evaluation programme is closely



linked to the academic staff organisation of the universities. Therefore the review is expected also to comment on how effectively the staff assessment procedure is managed by ACSUG and whether it meets the set aims.

The ENQA Board decided on 27 February 2007 to grant ACSUG Candidate Membership of ENQA. On that occasion the Board recommended that, in order to fulfil the criteria for Full Membership, ACSUG should take into account the following recommendations:

- Independence: the constitution and structure of the Agency and, especially, the actual membership of the Board of Directors, do not allow for a sufficient degree of independence: if an agency is comprised of those it reviews, it cannot be seen to be independent of them;
- and, related to this:
 - o it is not clear in what circumstances the decision-making body of ACSUG can overturn a recommendation by the Peer Review Team;
 - o it also remains unclear how the Agency's decision-making process ensures that no institution can exercise influence on the outcome of an accreditation procedure;
- More detailed information is needed about the human and financial resources available to the Agency
 - o It is not clear whether, or to what extent, students are involved in the external expert teams;
 - o It is not clear whether the final evaluation reports, or summaries of them, are publicly available;
 - o Further information is required about the criteria for the composition of the expert panels as well as the selection procedures of the experts;
- The mechanisms used for the collection of feedback from the bodies that have been reviewed should be improved, and a systematic internal quality assurance mechanism introduced for the assurance of the Agency's own quality;
- The Agency's website is in Galician and Spanish only and contains no English translations (the English pages are actually in Spanish).

In the course of the review, therefore, the team members will pay special attention to the way in which these recommendations have been addressed.



3. The Review Process

The process will be designed in the light of ENQA's policy on "ENQA-organised external reviews of member agencies".

The evaluation procedure will consist of the following steps:

- Nomination and appointment of the review team members;
- Self-evaluation by a ACSUG including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the panel of reviewers to ACSUG;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel will consist of five members: four external reviewers (two quality assurance experts, a representative of higher education institutions and a student member) and a review secretary. Two of the reviewers will be nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the national agencies, and will normally be drawn from senior serving members of staff of ENQA member agencies. The review secretary will be nominated by the ENQA Board. The fourth external reviewer will be drawn from nominations provided by the European University Association. The nomination of the student member will be requested from the European Students' Union (ESU). Current members of the ENQA Board will not be eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide to ACSUG the list of suggested experts with their respective curricula vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the ACSUG review.

The review team will be assisted by ACSUG in arriving to Santiago de Compostela A Coruña.

3.2 Self-evaluation by ACSUG, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report

ACSUG is responsible for the organisation of the self-evaluation process of the agency and shall take into account the following guidance:



- Self-evaluation is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-evaluation report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation: background description of the current situation of the agency; analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a summary of perceived strengths and weaknesses;
- The report is also well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which ACSUG fulfils its mission and objectives and tasks of external quality assurance. The report will also demonstrate to what extent ACSUG meets the criteria for ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. The report will be submitted to the review panel a minimum of four weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

The review panel will draw up and publish a schedule of the site visit. The schedule will include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review team during the site visit, the duration of which will be 2 days.

3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the expert panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under article 2. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings. A draft will be submitted for comment to ACSUG within four weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If ACSUG chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chairperson of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the expert panel will take into account the statement by ACSUG, finalise the document and submit it to ACSUG and ENQA.

The final report will be completed within two months of the site visit.

4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

ACSUG will consider the expert panel's report and inform ENQA of its plans to implement any recommendations contained in the report. Subsequent to the



discussion of the evaluation results and any planned implementation measures with ENQA, the review report and the follow-up plans agreed upon will be published on the ACSUG website.

5. Budget

5.1 ACSUG shall pay the following review-related fees to ENQA directly:

- Chair 5,000 EUR
- Review secretary 5,000 EUR
- Other panel members 3,000 EUR
- Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat 5,000 EUR
- Travel and subsistence expenses (approximate) 6,000 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000 EUR for the review. If the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, ACSUG will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. Thus if the travel/accommodation budget exceeds 6 000 EUR, ACSUG will pay the difference based on the justification of expenses (i.e. receipts and boarding passes). However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses within the limits of the planned budget, and will refund to ACSUG any under spend if the travel and subsistence costs are less than the agreed allowance.

6. Indicative Schedule of the Review

The duration of the evaluation is scheduled to take 13 months, from November 2008 to December 2009:

ACSUG starts self-evaluation	November 2008
Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	December 2008
Appointment of review team members by ENQA	December 2008- January 2009
ACSUG self-evaluation completed	January 2009
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	February 2009



Briefing of review team members	March-April 2009
Expert panel site visit	May 2009
Draft of evaluation report to ACSUG	June 2009
Statement of ACSUG to review team if necessary	July 2009
Submission of final report to ACSUG and ENQA	September 2009
Consideration of report by ACSUG	October 2009
Consideration of the report and response of ACSUG by ENQA	November 2009
Publication of report and implementation plan	December 2009

