

Approval of the Application
by Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University
System (ACSUG)
for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register

Register Committee
 26&27 November 2024

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Ver. 1.0
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Application of:	2023-07-06		
Agency registered since:	2009-07-01		
Type of review:	Targeted	Site visit:	2024-03-21
External review report of:	2024-10-23	Submitted:	2024-11-19
Review coordinated by:	European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)		
Review panel members:	Aurelija Valeikienė Damir Solak Jordi Villà i Freixa Marion Coy		
Decision of:	2024-11-27		
Registration until:	2029-10-23		
Absented themselves from decision-making:			
Attachments:	1. External Review Report , 2024-10-23		

1. The application of 2023-07-06 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 2023-08-17.
3. The Register Committee considered the targeted external review report of 2024-10-23 on the compliance of ACSUG with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).

Analysis:

4. In considering ACSUG's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account the following activities:
 - Assessment cycle of Galician degrees: validation (ex-ante accreditation), monitoring, modifications and accreditation (cyclical process),
 - Joint programme accreditation,
 - Accreditation of degrees and university centres outside Spain (international ex-post accreditation and monitoring
 - Institutional accreditation

- Institutional monitoring
- Assessment of institutional QA systems (FIDES-AUDIT)
- Assessment of institutional QA systems international (FIDES-AUDIT international)
- Teaching performance assessment programme (DOCENTIA)

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The following activities are not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to the application inclusion on the Register:

- Assessment of academic staff
- Research evaluation activities
- Labour market insertion studies

5. The Register Committee found that the report provides sufficient evidence and analysis on ACSUG's level of compliance with the ESG.

6. With regard to the specific European Standards, the Register Committee considered the following:

ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals

7. In its last decision, the Register Committee noted that the Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA) was responsible for the evaluation, certification and accreditation and also for the appeals following these reviews.

8. The Register Committee learned from the panel analysis that ACSUG has set up an appeal body (Review Committee). This body, however, has no decision-making power as it can only provide a recommendation and return the case to the original decision-making body, Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA).

9. The Register Committee further noted from the analysis that the president of CGIACA is a non-voting, member of the Review Committee. In panel's view, due to this organisational arrangement, the Review Committee and CGIACA are not sufficiently separate and independent of each other as there is a possibility of a CGIACA member also participating in the Review Committee meetings and therefore potentially influence the discussions of the appeals' body.

10. The Register Committee welcomed the steps taken by the agency regarding establishing a separate body for appeals and reiterated that such a body needs to be independent and separate, with full autonomy to make recommendations regarding the appeal in question. However, it is sufficient that such a body makes recommendations instead of final decisions on the result of external evaluation.

11. The Committee followed the panel's view that there is lack of clear separation between the accreditation (CGIACA) and appeal body (Review Committee) of ACSUG and therefore **concurred with the panel that ACSUG complies only partially with ESG 2.7.**

ESG 3.1 – Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

12. The Register Committee learned from the review report that this standard was not originally included in the targeted review, but the panel decided to include it after considering all the evidence and input of the review as a whole.

13. From the review report, the Register Committee noted that since the last strategy expired, ACSUG did not develop a new strategic plan. The Committee further noted that ACSUG is lacking reliable yearly planning and monitoring that would be linked to such a strategic plan. The panel found that this leads to significant deficiencies in strategic management of the agency.

14. The Register Committee further understood from the analysis of the panel that ACSUG lacks a clear communication and definitive distinction between the agency's consultancy services and external QA processes.

15. Following the lack of strategic planning of ACSUG and absence of clear distinction between its external quality assurance and consultancy activities, the Register Committee concurred with the panel that ACSUG complies only partially with ESG 3.1.

ESG 3.3 – Independence

16. In its last decision, the Register Committee concluded that ACSUG complies only partially with ESG 3.3 due to the strong influence of the regional government over the process for appointment of the Director, the chair and members of the Governing Board and the chairs of the CGIACA, leading to diminished organisational independence of the agency.

17. The Register Committee learned from the analysis of the panel that no change has taken place and that the Ministry still has a decisive role in the appointment procedures of these ACSUG bodies.

18. The Register Committee further understood from the analysis of the panel that ACSUG has limited autonomy in how to utilise its budget and manage its human resources.

19. Following the strong influence of the regional government over the agency, as well as ACSUG's lack of autonomy in managing its resources, the Register Committee concurred with the panel that ACSUG complies only partially with ESG 3.3.

ESG 3.4 – Thematic analysis

20. In its last decision, the Register Committee found that no thematic analysis) was performed, and therefore concluded that ACSUG complies only partially with ESG 3.4.

21. The Register Committee understood from the analysis of the panel that ACSUG relies on collaboration with, and contributes to, the thematic analyses coordinated by the Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies (REACU). However, The Committee also understood that ACSUG does not have any stand-alone thematic analyses that they conduct themselves and that thematic analysis is still not included in the regular workflows and task distribution of the agency (see also Register Committee remarks under ESG 3.1).

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22. The Register Committee emphasised that conducting thematic analyses under the partnership with REACU does not fulfil the requirements of the standard because the regularity of such activities is sporadic, and ACSUG is dependent on the thematic analysis coordinator (REACU).

23. Following the lack of thematic analysis conducted by ACSUG, the Register Committee concurred with the panel that ACSUG complies only partially with ESG 3.4.

24. In line with the EQAR Use and Interpretation of the ESG, the Register Committee understands that ESG 3.6. implies that previous recommendations and instances of partial compliance have been addressed properly.

25. The Register Committee noted that ACSUG has not responded appropriately to most of the instances of partial compliance raised in a previous external review, and had regressed in one standard (3.1), which has negative implications for ACSUG’s level of compliance with ESG 3.6. The Register Committee therefore once again emphasises the recommendations delivered by the 2019 and 2024 review panel and expects that these issues are addressed in the next (full) review of ACSUG.

26. For the remaining standards, the Register Committee was able to concur with the review panel's analysis and conclusion without further comments.

Conclusion:

27. Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that ACSUG demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) as follows:

Standard	Previous decision (2020-03-16)	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Compliance	Compliance	Compliance
2.2	Compliance	<i>[inherited]</i>	Inherited
2.3	Compliance	<i>[inherited]</i>	Inherited
2.4	Compliance	<i>[inherited]</i>	Inherited
2.5	Compliance	<i>[inherited]</i>	Inherited
2.6	Compliance	<i>[inherited]</i>	Inherited
2.7	Partial compliance	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.1	Compliance	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.2	Compliance	Full compliance	Compliance
3.3	Partial compliance	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.4	Partial compliance	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.5	Compliance	<i>[inherited]</i>	Inherited
3.6	Compliance	<i>[inherited]</i>	Inherited
3.7	Compliance	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

28. The Register Committee considered that ACSUG only achieved partial compliance with some standards. In its holistic judgement, the Register Committee concluded that these are specific and limited issues, but that ACSUG continues to comply substantially with the ESG as a whole.

29. The Register Committee therefore renewed ACSUG's inclusion on the Register. ACSUG's renewed inclusion shall be valid until 2029-10-31¹.

30. The Register Committee further underlined that ACSUG is expected to address the issues mentioned appropriately and to resolve them at the earliest opportunity.

¹ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §3.25 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.