

Approval of the Application
by the Agency for Quality of the Basque
University System (Unibasq) for Inclusion on the Register

Register Committee

Ref. RC13/2014/14

Ver. 1.0

Date 2014-11-29

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Application of:	08/08/2014
External review report of:	April 2014
Review coordinated by:	ENQA
Review panel members:	Thierry Malan (Chair), Pieter-Jan Van de Velde (Secretary), Maria João Machado Pires da Rosa, Gerard Wrixon, Cristina Pastor Valcárcel
Decision of:	29 November 2014
Registration until:	30 April 2019
Absented themselves from decision-making:	Luis Delgado (Spain, observer)

1. The application of 8/8/14 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee considered the external review report of April 2014 on the compliance of Unibasq with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).
3. The Register Committee found that the report provides clear evidence and analysis of how Unibasq complies with ESG.
4. The Register Committee sought and received clarification from Unibasq.

Analysis:

5. In considering Unibasq's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee only took into account the external review, follow-up and monitoring of official degree programmes; ex-ante and ex-post evaluation of official programmes (i.e. re-accreditation), voluntary evaluation of new "*titolos propios*" study programmes, audits of internal quality assurance systems of faculties (AUDIT – shared programme with ANECA, AQU and ACSUG) and fulfilment of performance agreements between the Basque government and universities. Activities related to individual staff are not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to Unibasq's registration.

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

ESG 2.4 and 3.7: The review panel recommended that Unibasq establish flexible procedures for the appointment of students to evaluation committees and involve international experts in the committees (p. 18).

The Register Committee received clarification from Unibasq (letter of 21/10/2014) stating that it had begun to establish a pool of international experts who can master the Spanish or Basque language. Unibasq further clarified that it had established an agreement with the national students' union (CREUP) with a view to a better involvement of students.

The Register Committee acknowledged these developments but noted that the regular involvement of students on all review committees is yet to become practice. The issue has therefore been flagged.

ESG 2.5: The Register Committee noted that, according to the review panel, not all review reports produced by Unibasq are published: while those on institutional evaluation (AUDIT) and on follow-up procedures are published, reports on the ex-ante evaluation of study programmes and "*titolos propios*" are not public.

The Register Committee therefore concurred with the panel's conclusion that Unibasq only partially complies with the standard, and the issue has been flagged.

The Register Committee further noted the review panel's recommendation to broaden the intended readership of Unibasq's reports and to ensure that reports include all key findings leading to a positive or negative conclusion.

ESG 2.8: The review report referred to different initiatives and activities carried out by Unibasq (e.g. symposia on the quality of the Basque system) as well as its involvement in activities with other quality assurance agencies in Spain (overview of the status of external quality assessment in Spain and in the design of an Integrated University Information System).

The review panel, however, found that Unibasq has yet to produce a system-wide analysis as such, based on the general findings of the external quality assurance reviews it carried out. The lack of sufficient resources is an inhibiting factor in that regard, and it has been flagged.

ESG 3.4: Unibasq's budget is dependent on the funding received from the Basque Government. Additional income stems from national and international projects and assessment fees from the academic staff

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evaluation programme. Due to the financial crisis and a reduction of its workload the budget of Unibasq dropped significantly recently.

The review panel recommended that Unibasq diversify its funding to reduce dependency on the government.

The Register Committee received clarification (letter of 21/10/2014) from Unibasq, explaining that the agency was still in negotiations with the Basque Government for the approval of a new model of financing. Unibasq further noted that it is trying to diversify its incomes by providing services to universities outside the Basque Country.

The Register Committee considered that the concerns expressed regarding Unibasq's capacity to ensure adequate resources for the increasing number of its activities were not yet resolved. This matter has therefore been flagged.

ESG 3.7: The Register Committee noted that Unibasq's appeals procedure currently does not cover the evaluation programmes that are within the scope of the ESG.

The Committee received clarifications from Unibasq, which explained that the agency is currently working on the establishment of an appeals commission for all evaluation programmes; Unibasq's Advisory Board is deliberating on a procedure and the composition of the appeals commission.

The Register Committee found that the establishment and functioning of the new appeals system will require close attention in the next review of Unibasq. The issue has therefore been flagged.

Conclusion:

7. **Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that Unibasq complies substantially with the ESG and therefore, approved, the application for inclusion on the Register.**

Unibasq's inclusion shall be valid until 31/04/2019¹.

8. **The Register Committee underlined that Unibasq only carried out activities in the Basque higher education system at the time of the review. Consequently, only these activities were reviewed by the external panel.**

¹ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

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The Register Committee underlined that Unibasq is required to make a Substantive Change Report once it starts to conduct reviews outside the Basque Country, which it currently plans according to the report. In doing so, Unibasq needs to ensure that these activities will be fully and thoroughly based on the ESG.

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9. The following issues have been flagged for particular attention when considering a potential application for renewal of inclusion. Unibasq is expected to address these issues specifically in its next self-evaluation report, setting out whether the issue has been resolved or indicating what progress has been made. Unibasq is further responsible for informing the coordinator of the next external review and the review panel of the need to address these issues in the external review report.

ESG 2.5: Publication of reports

It should be addressed whether Unibasq has moved to publish full evaluation reports for all its ESG-relevant activities.

ESG 3.4: Resources

It should be receive attention whether Unibasq has been able to secure sufficient and sustainable resources, from both government funding as well as other sources, amongst others with regard to its ability to carry out system-wide analyses.

ESG 3.7: Regular involvement of students

It should receive attention whether Unibasq has ensured that students are regularly involved in all review committees.

ESG 3.7: Appeals

The new appeals procedure developed by Unibasq should receive attention.