

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

Register Committee
 16 March 2020

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Application of:	26/06/2018
Agency registered since:	18/11/2010
External review report of:	19/09/2019
Review coordinated by:	European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)
Review panel members:	Jon Haakstad (Chair), Carmen Fenoll (academic), Alexandra Raijmakers (student), Bryan Maguire
Decision of:	16/03/2020
Registration until:	30/09/2024
Absented themselves from decision-making:	N/A
Attachments:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirmation of eligibility, 12/07/2018 2. External Review Report, 19/09/2019 3. Additional Information on the Review Report, 30/10/2019 4. Request to the Review Panel, 31/01/2020 5. Clarification by the Review Panel, 14/02/2020

1. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 12/07/2018 having considered clarification received from ACSUG on 29/07/2019.
2. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 19/09/2019 on the compliance of ACSUG with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).
3. The Register Committee further considered the tabled information on the external review report of 30/10/2019.
4. The Register Committee sought and received clarification from the chair of the review panel (letter of 14/02/2020).

Analysis:

5. In considering ACSUG's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account:

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Activities at programme level:

- Assessment cycle of Galician degrees: *validation (ex-ante accreditation), monitoring, modifications and accreditation (cyclical process)*.
- *Evaluation of Art Degrees (*)*
- *Joint programme accreditation*

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Activities at institutional level:

- *Assessment of institutional Quality Assurance Systems (FIDES-AUDIT program)*.
- *Teaching performance assessment program (DOCENTIA program)*.
- *Institutional accreditation of Galician faculties*.
- *International evaluations*
- *Assessment (evaluation and accreditation) of degrees and university centres outside Spain*.
- *Institutional Monitoring (*)*

6. We understand that ACSUG has recently piloted *institutional monitoring (*)* and the *evaluation of art degrees (*)* and therefore they have only been partly addressed by the panel. The Register Committee underlined that a substantive change report should be submitted by ACSUG for its newly piloted activities, showing how the agency ensures the compliance of these activities with the ESG¹.

7. We confirm that the other activities are not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to the application for renewal of inclusion on the Register.

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

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

ESG 2.3 – Implementing processes

10. In the last decision to renew ACSUG's registration on EQAR, the Register Committee flagged ACSUG's lack of a self-assessment as part of its review processes. In its current review, the panel confirmed that all procedures include a self-assessment by the applicant higher education institution.

¹Please fill in the corresponding form at: <https://www.eqar.eu/register/substantive-change-report/?cn-reloaded=1>

ESG 2.6 – Reporting

11. In its previous decision, the Register Committee flagged ACSUG’s publication of full reports of the FIDES-AUDIT reviews. According to the analysis of the review panel, all completed reports by ACSUG are published. The Register Committee could further verify that the results of the FIDES-AUDIT review are made available on the agency’s web page².

12. The review panel’s analysis also revealed that the reports resulting from the ex-ante accreditation (validation) assessment are not published by ACSUG, as deferred applications for initial accreditation are usually withdrawn by the higher education institution before a final decision is taken. The Register Committee has therefore asked the review panel to clarify whether ACSUG has ever reached a final decision of rejection in an ex-ante accreditation assessment and whether in such a scenario, ACSUG would publish its report with a negative decision?

13. In its response letter, the panel clarified that ACSUG has not reached a final decision of rejection in an ex-ante accreditation (validation) assessment at that time. The panel added that it has no reason to doubt that ACSUG would publish its ex-ante reports with a negative decision, in case that such reports were completed.

14. Having considered the clarification by the panel, and the reassurance that ACSUG would publish any negative reports resulting from its ex-ante accreditation, the Register Committee could follow the conclusion of the panel that ACSUG complies with ESG 2.6

ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals

15. The Register Committee noted that Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA) is both the body responsible for evaluation, certification and accreditation and also the body responsible for the appeals following these reviews. In order to ensure a fair decision-making, the panel recommends the establishment of an independent committee to review appeals.

16. In its Additional information to the external review report (p. 4) the agency stated that following the CGIACA’s meeting in late autumn, the agency will consider the possible nomination of candidates for an independent appeals board.

17. The Register Committee welcomed the ACSUG’s intention to set up a separate board to handle appeals, but the Committee underlined that such changes are yet implemented and that the nomination of its members and the revised appeal process is yet to be reviewed.

18. The Register Committee was therefore unable to concur with the review panel’s judgment of (substantial) compliance, and concluded that ACSUG complies only partially with ESG 2.7.

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²See: <http://www.acsug.es/en/centros/fidesaudit/resultados>

ESG 3.3 – Independence

19. The Register Committee noted that the president of the Governing Board of ACSUG, the director of ACSUG and the president of the CGIACA (following the nomination by the Governing Board) are all members appointed by the Galician Government. In view of the panel’s recommendation to ACSUG i.e. to set procedures in the selection of the director of the agency, president of the Governing Board and president of the CGIACA the Register Committee asked the panel to clarify whether the appointments of these bodies follow a set of criteria and if the panel has reviewed these criteria. The panel responded that it has only considered the criteria and tasks set in the Statutes of 2018, based on professional competence and prior experience, and that these criteria are intended to be used in the future appointment processes.

20. While the Register Committee welcomed the appointment criteria based on professional competence and prior experience, the Committee underlined that the regional Galician Government nevertheless remains **directly involved in the appointment of the majority of members in the agency’s governing body, in the appointment of president of the Governing Body, the president of the agency’s decision making body (CGIACA), the director of the agency and the president of the Advisory Council.**

21. The Register Committee welcomed ACSUG’s intention (as stated in its Additional information on the external review report, p. 6) of appointing a representative from outside Galicia in the Governing Board and as part of CGIACA’s but noted that the current addition does not change the agencies reliance on the regional Spanish government.

22. While the involvement of the government (as one of its stakeholders) is encouraged, the current organisational arrangements does not guarantee clear and sufficient safeguards to prevent the possible interference of the regional Galician government in ACSUG’s governance.

23. **Considering the close interlinkage between ACSUG and the Galician government, the Committee could not follow the panel’s judgment of (full) compliance, and concluded that ACSUG complies only partially with ESG 3.3.**

ESG 3.4 – Thematic analysis

24. The panel’s findings show that ACSUG engages in broader forms of analysis, however these studies do not fully answer the demand for thematic analysis as defined in the ESG.

25. In its Additional information to the external review report, the agency stated that the development of thematic analysis is going to become its priority following the hiring of new staff. ACSUG intends to launch external working groups to develop thematic analysis, which are to be coordinated by the new staff. In addition ACSUG also is considering to develop thematic analysis through their involvement in REACU (the Spanish Network of quality assurance agencies).

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26. The Register Committee welcomed ACSUG’s plans of addressing its shortcomings in preparing thematic analysis, but as it currently stands ACSUG does not fully meet the requirement of the standard i.e. no studies have been undertaken yet by its new working group.

27. The Register Committee therefore concurred with the review panel that ACSUG complies only partially with ESG 3.4.

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

Conclusion:

29. 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	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Full compliance	Compliance
2.2	Full compliance	Compliance
2.3	Full compliance	Compliance
2.4	Full compliance	Compliance
2.5	Full compliance	Compliance
2.6	Full compliance	Compliance
2.7	Substantial compliance	Partial compliance
3.1	Full compliance	Compliance
3.2	Full compliance	Compliance
3.3	Full compliance	Partial compliance
3.4	Partial compliance	Partial compliance
3.5	Substantial compliance	Compliance
3.6	Substantial compliance	Compliance
3.7	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

30. 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.

31. The Register Committee therefore renewed ACSUG’s inclusion on the Register. ACSUG’s renewed inclusion shall be valid until 30/09/2024³.

³ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

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

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