

**Approval of the Application  
by the National Agency for Quality Evaluation  
and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA)  
for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register**

**Register Committee**  
2/3 May 2013

**Ref.** RC/2013/02

**Ver.** 1.0

**Date** 2013-05-06

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1. The application of 01/03/2013 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee considered the external review report of November 2012 on the compliance of ANECA with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The Register Committee further considered the letter by ENQA on the reconfirmation of ANECA's membership of 29/01/2013 and the letter by ANECA of 01/04/2013 on how ANECA acted upon some of the recommendations made by the external review panel.
3. The Register Committee sought and received clarification from ANECA (letter of 16/04/2013) and the chair of the external review panel (letter of 22/04/2013) concerning the level of compliance with some of the standards.

Analysis:

4. In considering ANECA's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee only took into account those activities that constitute external quality assurance in the sense of the ESG, i.e. ex-ante and ex-post review and monitoring of study programmes (VERIFICA, MONITOR, ACCREDITA and MENCION), as well as reviews at institutional level (AUDIT, DOCENTIA). ANECA's responsibilities related to individual academic staff are not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to the application for renewal of inclusion on the Register.
5. Due to their close interlinkage the Register Committee has considered the VERIFICA, MONITOR and ACCREDITA programmes in conjunction with each other, rather than as entirely separate activities.
6. With regard to the specific European Standards and Guidelines, the Register Committee considered the following:

**ESG 2.1:** The review panel concluded that the existence and effectiveness of internal quality assurance in line with Part 1 of the ESG was only implicitly addressed in the VERIFICA and MONITOR stages.

The panel was unable to conclude to what extent ACREDITA takes into account the existence and effectiveness of higher education institutions' internal quality assurance, since ACREDITA reviews have not yet been rolled out in practice. This issue has therefore been flagged.

**ESG 2.4:** The participation of international experts was flagged when ANECA was initially admitted to the Register. The Register Committee noted that ANECA gave consideration to that issue and that an optional “international path” for accreditations was planned.

**ESG 2.8:** With regard to the review panel's recommendation that ANECA produce analytical system-wide reports in addition to its annual reports, the Register Committee noted that ANECA undertook two cross-cutting analyses in two subject areas.

**ESG 3.6:** The independence of ANECA from government was flagged when ANECA was initially admitted to the Register. The review panel pointed out that the proportion of governmental representatives on the ANECA Board of Trustees was reduced since 2008, but that the number of governmental representatives, however, remained substantial. The review panel particularly noted that the minister responsible for higher education is the chair of the Board.

Whereas the panel concluded that ANECA was operationally independent to the extent that the results of ANECA's external quality assurance activities were not subject to undue influence, the panel underlined that “there must remain some reservations about the level of independence of the overall structure of governance” (p. 28).

The Register Committee concluded that, despite the adjustments in the composition of the Board of Trustees, ANECA's compliance with the standard remained not obvious; the concerns that led the Register Committee to flag that issue in 2008 were, in principle, still present. The independence of ANECA's governing structure has therefore been flagged for close attention also at the time of ANECA's next renewal.

**ESG 3.7:** The participation of students on ANECA's expert groups was flagged when ANECA was initially admitted to the Register. The review report concluded that students are now fully involved in ANECA's processes.

The review panel, however, pointed out that not all of ANECA's activities incorporated the remaining elements required by the standard, notably a self-evaluation phase and site visits. The review report contained an analysis of whether these elements are present in the VERIFICA and MONITOR stages, as well as in the AUDIT and DOCENTIA programmes.

The review panel was unable to conclude whether the ACREDITA stage was in line with the requirements of the standard. The Register Committee noted the decision communicated by ANECA in its letter of 01/04/2013 to incorporate a self-evaluation phase and site visits in the ACREDITA programme. This information can, however, not replace the analysis by a review panel, and this issue has therefore been flagged.

7. The Register Committee had no specific observations on the review panel's analyses of ANECA's compliance with the remaining standards.

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Conclusion:

8. Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that ANECA complies substantially with the ESG and, therefore, approved the application for renewal of inclusion on the Register.

ANECA's renewed inclusion shall be valid until 30/11/2017<sup>1</sup>.

9. The following issues have been flagged for particular attention when considering a potential application for renewal of inclusion. They should be addressed in the next self-evaluation report and external review report on ANECA's compliance with the ESG:

**ESG 2.1 – Internal Quality Assurance Processes**

It should receive attention how the processes and criteria used in the ACCREDITA programme take into account the existence and effectiveness of internal quality assurance in line with Part 1 of the ESG.

**ESG 3.6 – Independence**

It should be addressed whether ANECA developed further its governing structure, in particular the composition and functioning of the Board of Trustees, with a view to strengthening its structural independence as well as to safeguarding systematically its operational independence.

**ESG 3.7 – External Quality Assurance Procedures**

It should receive attention how the key elements required by the standard, in particular a self-evaluation and a site visit, have been incorporated in the further development and implementation of the ACCREDITA programme.

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