

Approval of the Application

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

Register Committee

Ref. RC13/2014/13

Ver. 1.0

Date 2014-11-29

Page 0 / 3

Application of:	28/07/2014
Agency registered since:	18/11/2010
External review report of:	31/07/2014
Review coordinated by:	ENQA
Review panel members:	Fiona Crozier (Chair), David Cairns (Secretary), Jana Moehren, Andrejs Rauhvargers, Nadja Kiiskinen
Decision of:	29 November 2014
Registration until:	31 July 2019
Absented themselves from decision-making:	Luis Delgado (Spain, observer)

1. The application of 28/7/14 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 31/07/2014 on the compliance of ACSUG with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).
3. The Register Committee found that the report provides clear evidence and analysis of how ACSUG complies with ESG, except for its activities outside of Galicia.
4. The Register Committee sought and received clarification from ACSUG as well as the chair of the review panel.

Analysis:

5. In considering ACSUG's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee only took into account external reviews of study programmes (Verification, Monitoring, Accreditation, activities outside of Galicia) and higher education institutions (FIDES-AUDIT, activities outside of Galicia) that are within the scope of the ESG. Activities related to individual teaching staff as well as to research units or projects are not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to ACSUG's registration.
6. The Register Committee noted that the panel considered the voluntary FIDES-AUDIT programme a developmental initiative for quality enhancement, rather than an external review process. The Register

Committee found that, while clearly developmental in focus, FIDES-AUDIT is – in its present form – a review process with typical characteristics of activities within the scope of the ESG (e.g. review by a team of experts) and, thus, needs to be considered in terms of its compliance with the ESG.

7. The Register Committee noted that the review report did not address ACSUG's activities outside of Galicia (i.e. in Central Asia and Latin America). The Register Committee sought and received clarification from the review panel, which explained that it did not consider the ESG applicable to these activities due to them being carried out outside of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The Register Committee underlined that registered agencies are expected to substantially comply with the ESG wherever they operate, within and outside the EHEA (see par. 17 of the Practices and Interpretations). While ACSUG states on its website that it incorporates the ESG and its experience at universities in Galicia in those activities, this cannot replace the analysis by an external panel.

Given that the international activities are a small part of ACSUG's external quality assurance activities and there are no obvious indications of non-compliance with the ESG this omission did not call into question the Register Committee's overall judgement. The issue has, however, been flagged.

The Register Committee underlined that ACSUG is required to make a Substantive Change Report in case it changes or extends this international activities.

8. 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 ACSUG introduce an explicit critical retrospective self-evaluation report as part of the process. The panel upheld this recommendation after ACSUG's response to the review report, setting out that a self-analysis was already (though implicitly) requires on the part of institutions. Since the presence of a "self-assessment or equivalent procedure" is a key requirement of the ESG, this issue has been flagged.

ESG 2.5: The review panel stated that reports of FIDES-AUDIT reviews "do not appear to be published" and found this understandable due to the nature of these reviews. The Register Committee underlined that the ESG require all reports to be published, including for reviews with a developmental focus.

The Register Committee therefore considered that ACSUG only partially complies with the standard. The publication of FIDES-AUDIT reports has been flagged.

ESG 2.7: The review report noted that the FIDES-AUDIT programme is not periodic in nature. It was unclear to the Register Committee whether the certification of internal QA systems is awarded for a limited period of time, which would reflect the substance of this standard appropriately in a voluntary review scheme. The issue requires consideration by ACSUG in the future.

ESG 3.7: The review panel was not convinced that ACSUG has in place a fully-developed and robust set of procedures and protocols for appeals.

The Register Committee sought and received additional clarification from ACSUG on the matter, which essentially confirmed the information provided in ACSUG's statement on the review report.

While the Register Committee was satisfied that there is a possibility for appeal in ACSUG's various activities, the details of its appeals procedures and their effectiveness will need to be addressed specifically in the next external review of ACSUG.

Register Committee

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Page 2 / 3

Conclusion:

9. **Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that ACSUG continues to comply substantially with the ESG and, therefore, renewed its inclusion on the Register.**

ACSUG's inclusion shall be valid until 31/07/2019¹.

10. The following issues have been flagged for particular attention when considering a potential application for further renewal of inclusion. ACSUG 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. ACSUG 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.

Coverage of the external review

ACSUG should ensure that its next self-evaluation report and the corresponding external review report analyse compliance with ESG part 2 in all activities within the scope of the ESG, irrespective of whether they take place in Galicia or elsewhere, within or outside the EHEA.

ESG 2.5: Reports of FIDES-AUDIT

It should receive attention whether full reports of FIDES-AUDIT reviews have been published by ACSUG.

ESG 3.7: Self-assessment

It should be addressed whether ACSUG has included a self-assessment or an equivalent element in its review processes.

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