

Approval of the Application
by the Quality Assurance Agency for the University
System in Castilla y León (ACSUCYL)
for Renewal of Inclusion on the Register

Register Committee

Ref. RC15/A17

Ver. 1.0

Date 2015-06-05

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Application of:	12/09/2014
Agency registered since:	18/11/2010
External review report of:	December 2014
Review coordinated by:	ENQA
Review panel members:	Teresa Sánchez Chaparro (chair), Milena Georgieva Kirova (academic), Asnate Kažoka (student), Christian Moldt (secretary), Oliver Vettori
Decision of:	4/5 June 2015
Registration until:	31 December 2019
Absented themselves from decision-making:	none

1. The application adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee considered the external review report of December 2014 on the compliance of ACSUCYL with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG¹). The Register Committee found that the report provides clear evidence and analysis of how ACSUCYL complies with ESG.
3. The Register Committee sought and received clarification from ACSUCYL (letter of 30/04/2015).

Analysis:

4. In considering ACSUCYL's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee only took into account assessments of university degrees as well as DOCENTIA reviews. Assessments of individual staff and the various types of assessment of research institutes and projects are not within the scope of the ESG and, thus, not pertinent to ACSUCYL's registration.

¹ The application was made before adoption of the 2015 version of the ESG. It has therefore been considered on the basis of the 2005 version of the ESG, and all references refer to that version.

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

6. **ESG 2.2:** The Register Committee concurred with the review panel's conclusion for that standard.

The Committee underlined the recommendation by the panel that ACSUCYL should involve higher education institutions and stakeholders of Castilla y León more actively in the design and further development of its quality assurance processes.

7. **ESG 2.4:** The Register Committee sought and received clarification on the role of students on ACSUCYL panels.

8. While the Committee acknowledged that different panel members have different areas of expertise and, thus, each make their contributions based on their specific area of expertise, it was not entirely clear that student panel members have a fully equal role in that they may comment on the full set of issues addressed in reviews. The Committee underlined the need to ensure that student panel members are able to partake fully in the panels' work.

9. **ESG 2.6:** The effectiveness of the follow-up procedures in the second stage of the AUDIT programme was flagged when ACSUCYL was admitted to the Register in 2010.

The Register Committee concluded that this issue has become obsolete since ACSUCYL discontinued the AUDIT programme.

The review report demonstrated that the degree assessment system provides a clear and explicit follow-up stage between initial verification and the first (ex-post) accreditation.

The Register Committee noted that there is currently no system of further follow-up between the first ex-post accreditation and consecutive periodic re-accreditations. The Committee acknowledged that such a follow-up was currently not provided for in the Spanish legal framework.

The Register Committee, however, did not concur with the review panel's conclusion and considered that ACSUCYL only partially complies with the standard. While the shortcoming might be attributed to the existing legislation, this does not change the level of compliance. This issue has therefore been flagged.

10. **ESG 2.8:** The enhancement of communication and exchange between different units, with a view to developing comprehensive system-wide analyses, was flagged when ACSUCYL was admitted to the Register.

Based on the analysis by the review panel the Register Committee recognised that ACSUCYL succeeded in improving the internal communication and exchange between different units.

While the external review report refers to various reporting activities, the Register Committee noted that the panel recommended that ACSUCYL enhance the involvement of stakeholders in planning and designing its system-wide analyses.

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11. **ESG 3.4:** The Register Committee noted the review panel’s discussion on the decrease of ACSUCYL’s budget and the concerns expressed by the panel with regard to the agency managing the programme (re-)accreditation assessments, including site visits.

The panel found it “hard to see how the agency, given the current economic situation and already engaged resources, can add so much new extra activity without compromising the quality of its procedures” (p. 29).

The Register Committee received clarification from ACSUCYL as to how it addressed this challenge. ACSUCYL explained that it optimised its processes (incl. virtual committee meetings) and re-assigned additional senior staff members to programme assessments at the expense of another evaluation activity (for individual staff), which has been suspended.

While the Register Committee acknowledged the measures taken by ACSUCYL, it could not determine with full certainty whether these measures are able to completely allay the concern noted by the panel and sustainably ensure that ACSUCYL has sufficient resources for its programme (re-)accreditation assessments.

The Register Committee was thus unable to concur with the panel’s conclusion that the agency fully complies with the standard, and concluded that ACSUCYL only partially complies with the standard. ACSUCYL’s equipment with sufficient resources therefore warrants due attention in the future.

12. **ESG 3.7:** The Register Committee underlined the review panel’s recommendation that ACSUCYL should revise its appeals system so that a separate committee handles appeals, rather than the same committee that conducted the review and made the appealed decision. The issue has been flagged.

Conclusion:

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

ACSUCYL’s renewed inclusion shall be valid until 31/12/2019².

² Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

14. The Register Committee noted that ACSUCYL was considering the possibility of “providing EQA services to HEIs outside Spain” (p. 28) and underlined that this would constitute a substantive change of its activities. ACSUCYL is therefore expected to make a Substantive Change Report to EQAR once it finalised its assessment methodology for reviews of higher education institutions/programmes abroad or as soon as it commenced to conduct reviews abroad.
15. The following issues have been flagged for particular attention when considering a potential application for renewal of inclusion. ACSUCYL 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. ACSUCYL 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 2.6: Follow-up procedures

It should receive attention whether follow-up procedures were implemented for degrees between the first ex-post accreditation and consecutive periodic re-accreditations.

ESG 3.7: Appeals procedure

It should be addressed how ACSUCYL has revised its appeals system and whether it ensured that appeals are handled by a committee separate from the one that made the appealed decision.

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