

**PROGRESS REPORT OF THE AGENCY FOR
QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE GALICIAN
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM (ACSUG)**

Santiago de Compostela, 15 November 2011

1) INTRODUCTION

The aim of this report is to inform the ENQA board about the main changes and actions that the ACSUG has carried out since the external evaluation in November 2009. During the external evaluation, some areas of development and recommendations were identified and the main part of the report is related to them.

The ACSUG would like to stress that in general, both the self-evaluation process and the external evaluation that were carried out have been extremely useful in improving its activities, especially the references that can help to improve procedures and internal quality assurance mechanisms, and influence compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area (ESG).

The ACSUG was included in the EQAR in November 2010 and the documents on the external ENQA evaluation were the main information analyzed by the Register to consider that ACSUG operates in substantial compliance with the ESG.

The ACSUG has played an active role in all of the activities connected with ENQA, especially since it was accepted as a candidate member. We have listed a series of activities below carried out in this regard.

- a) The Quality Technician from ACSUG plays an active role in the Internal Quality Assurance Group of ENQA, and attends the annual meetings of this group. In 2011, the ACSUG has taken part in a benchmarking activity on quality indicators.
- b) Collaboration in studies and projects launched by ENQA: quality procedures in European higher education, visions for the future; MAP-ESG consultation; publication of quality assurance results in the EHEA, etc.

Regarding other international projects:

- a) Since 2009, the ACSUG has been involved in the European Union Tempus Project to set up the Central Asian Quality Assurance and Accreditation Network (CANQA). The project, in which representatives from Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan are taking part, lasts for three years (2009-2011).
- b) ACSUG and the University of San Martín de Porres in Peru have signed an agreement whereby the ACSUG is to carry out the tasks of evaluating and certifying this university, to ensure the level of quality assurance. Three of the university's centres (Faculty of Obstetrics and Nursing, Faculty of Deontology and the Institute of Quality in Education) have been evaluated in 2011. In 2012 another two centres of this university are going to carry out a similar process.
- c) The ACSUG and the University School of Real Estate Activities (Escola Superior de Actividades Imobiliárias, ESAI) from Portugal signed an agreement in 2011 whereby ACSUG is to carry out the tasks of evaluating and certifying the degrees of this university. It is expected that the evaluation activities will start in 2012.
- d) The ACSUG is taking part in the Erasmus Mundus Project "Meda Dimension International de l'Assurance Qualité - MEDIAQ" (the objective of the project is to implement quality assurance mechanisms in North Africa countries). The project is going to be presented in February 2012 to the European Commission.

The attendance to international conference and meetings and the presentation of papers and posters is increasing:

DATE	ACTIVITY	PARTICIPATION	PLACE
From 24/09/09 to 26/09/09	Development of Competencies of Work and Education (DECOWE) conference	Attendance by ACSUG staff and presentation of a paper on labour market insertion	Ljubljana (Slovenia)
28/09/09 29/09/09	Sixth ENQA General Meeting	Attendance by the Director and a worker of ACSUG	Barcelona (Spain)
From 19/11/09 to 21/11/09	4 th European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF)	Attendance by the Director and ACSUG staff. Presentation of a paper on internal management systems	Copenhagen (Denmark)
From 14/12/09 to 16/12/09	Training workshops: "Modernization of the internal and external quality assurance system of higher education" (CANQA Tempus Project)	Attendance and presentation of a paper by an ACSUG employee	Dushanbe (Tajikistan)
08/06/10 09/06/10	Annual Meeting of the Internal Quality Assurance Group (IQA Group) of ENQA	Presentation by an ACSUG worker about good practice in management systems	London (United Kingdom)
23/09/10 24/09/10	ENQA General Assembly	Attendance by the ACSUG Director and presentation of a paper on labour market insertion	Helsinki (Finland)
From 18/11/10 to 21/11/10	5th European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF)	Attendance by the ACSUG Director and presentation of a paper on the DOCENTIA programme	Lyon (France)
From 18/11/10 to 21/11/10	CANQA annual Conference: "Modernization of internal and external quality assurance in higher education of Central Asia"	Attendance and presentation of a paper by an ACSUG worker	Almaty (Kazakhstan)
From 24/02/11 to 26/02/11	Conference on Modeling and Measurement of Competencies in Higher Education	Attendance and presentation of a poster by an ACSUG worker	Berlin (Germany)
04/03/2011	ENQA Members´ Forum	Attendance by the ACSUG Director	The Hague (Nederland)
From 05/04/11 to 07/04/11	INQAAHE Conference 2011	Attendance and presentation of a paper by ACSUG staff	Madrid (Spain)
From 06/10/11 to 07/10/11	ENQA General Assembly	Attendance by the ACSUG Director	Bucharest (Romania)
From 25/10/11 to 26/10/11	New Perspectives for Master Study Programmes in Europe	Attendance and presentation of a paper by an ACSUG worker	Berlin (Germany)

2) COMMENTS ABOUT THE AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT IDENTIFIED IN THE LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF ENQA DATED 8 DECEMBER 2009.

In the letter in which ACSUG was accepted as a full membership of ENQA, the ENQA Board identified two main areas of development. Below we are going to explain the actions undertaken to deal with the areas of development.

AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 1

The composition of the decision-making body CGIACA: there should be representatives from outside the Galicia region, other professionals and students in the CGIACA.

EXPLANATION FROM THE ACSUG REGARDING AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 1

The Galician Commission for Reports, Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA) is the higher evaluation body of ACSUG and it shall perform, with full independence, the functions of issuing reports, evaluation, certification and accreditation attributed to the ACSUG. Their members are appointed from amongst outstanding members of the academic and scientific community and they shall act on their own behalf and with full independence (they are not appointed in representation of any specific institution).

Taking into account the importance acquired by the CGIACA as the body responsible for evaluation, reporting and accreditation, and as the body that is ultimately responsible for the decisions taken in this regard, we understand that this body should be comprised of persons who have a thorough knowledge of the Galicia University System, as well as solid experience and recognized prestige in the university community, considering the transcendence and impact their decisions have on the university community (not only with regard to the accreditation of degrees, but also of professors).

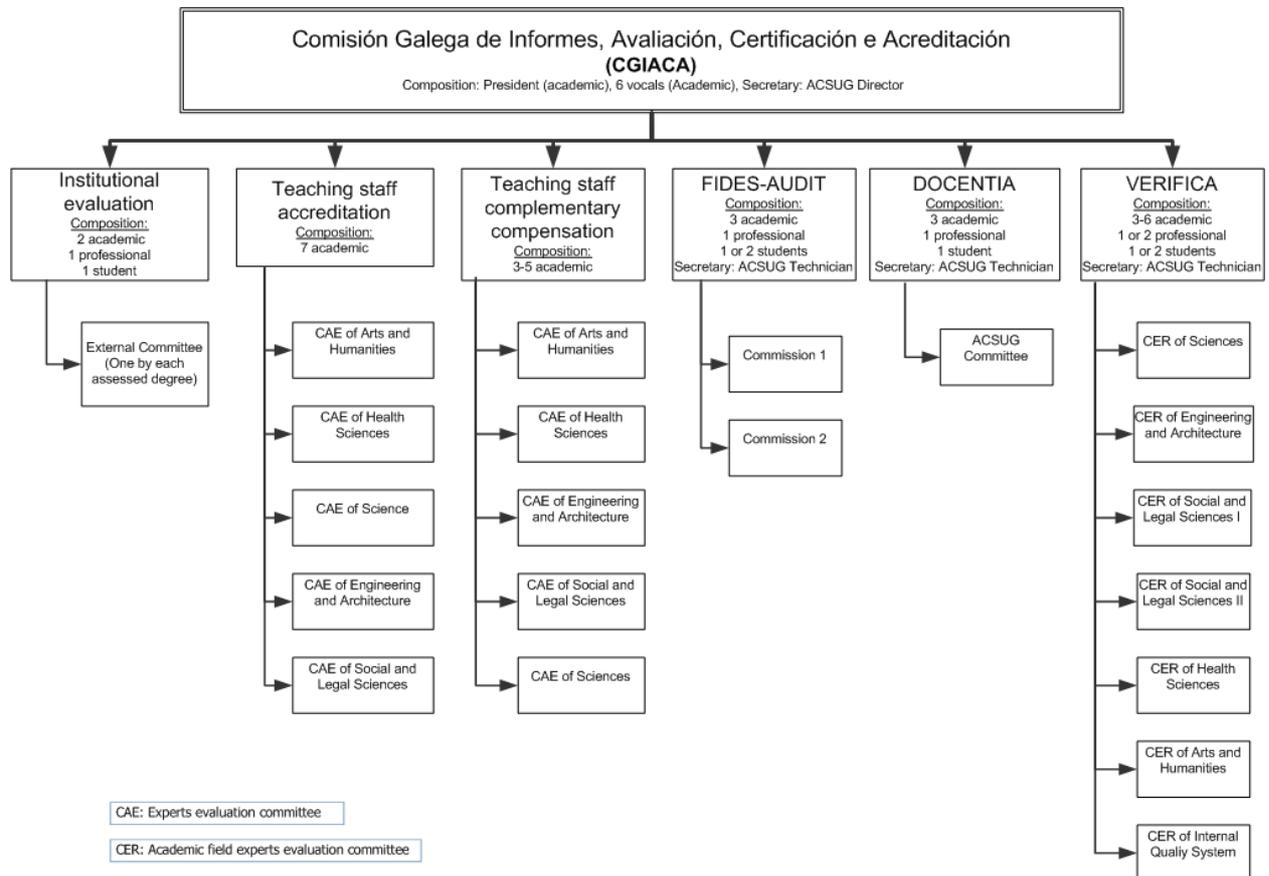
Unlike ACSUG, other agencies have chosen to create different evaluation bodies, whose members vary depending on the different programmes to be evaluated (degree courses, services, professors, research, etc.) which may facilitate the incorporation of foreign experts or students in some of these bodies. However, it may be seen that in some evaluation procedures, such as those corresponding to the evaluation of professors, these groups are non-existent.

At ACSUG we have considered that the body that is ultimately responsible for evaluation should have a global and unitary perspective of all of the procedures carried out in the Autonomous Region of Galicia, and which involve different aspects or facets of the university sphere (accreditation of degrees, evaluation of research, evaluation of professors, etc.).

Of course, this does not mean that the presence of these groups (students, professional experts, etc.) will be limited in the development of the quality assurance processes, but instead quite the opposite.

- a) Board of Directors: there are two representatives of the students and two people appointed, from amongst important members of the scientific or business community.
- b) Advisory Council: there are two representatives of the students and two representatives of the business area.

c) It is important to highlight that the CGIACA appoints expert committees to carry out the evaluation processes. In these expert committees the presence of the different groups is guaranteed (students, professional experts, academics) as it is showed in the following graph.



We consider that this system offers greater possibilities for the CGIACA to adjust the composition of these committees to the area being evaluated in each specific procedure. The CGIACA may only decide not to accept their decisions in cases when the decisions of the committees differ from or violate the established procedures and criteria, or when they are clearly unfair or irregular (in exceptional circumstances).

The Regulations of the CGIACA state that in these cases, the opinion of a third body, the Advisory Council, would be requested in order to resolve any doubts that may arise in the interpretation or application of the evaluation criteria of the committees. In any event, when a report from a committee is not accepted for any of the reasons given above, a new report has to be issued by another committee or by external experts, who will be appointed based on the procedure established by ACSUG for these types of situations.

AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 2

The Composition of the Advisory Council: in order for the Advisory Council to fulfill its functions in a constructive and critical manner, it is advisable that the Executive Director of ACSUG so not occupy the position of Chairman of the Advisory Council. The ACSUG Executive Director may attend the Advisory Council meetings, but should leave the meetings when the Advisory Council makes decisions and recommendations.

EXPLANATION FROM THE ACSUG REGARDING AREA OF DEVELOPMENT 2

In relation with the Advisory Council, their members have already been appointed, and the first meeting of the body took place in December 2010.

In the composition of the Advisory Council (published in the ACSUG website www.acsug.es) there are Spanish academics from outside of Galicia, international academics, students and business representatives.

In addition, at its first meeting the Advisory Council agreed that an employee of ACSUG would be the secretary of the Board. This employee (without voting rights) has a general knowledge of the ACSUG's activities and carries out coordination, administrative and technical tasks in the body. During the meetings, the Advisory Council can request the presence of another ACSUG staff member to clarify certain aspects of the topics that are being analyzed (in the first meeting the Advisory Council request the presence of one ACSUG degrees expert to explain the Pilot Project for Degree Monitoring).

As regards the function of the ACSUG's Director as the Chairman of the Advisory Council, he welcomes the attendants of the meeting and makes an initial presentation on the yearly activities undertaken by ACSUG. Before the meeting (at least one week before), a summary of activities is sent to the members, so they can analyze the documents beforehand

The ACSUG's Director does not have voting rights, and when the body is going to make decisions or recommendations he leaves the meeting and the secretary takes notes to then write the minutes of the meeting.

The functions of the Advisory Council include writing a yearly report on the ACSUG's activities. This report has to be approved by the Council. It should be noted that the Secretary and the Chairman do not have voting rights.

The next meeting of the Advisory Council will take place on 21 November 2011.

3) COMMENTS RELATED TO THE OTHER PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT OF 31 JULY 2009.

ESG 2.4 - Process fit for purpose

Recommendation: ACSUG should initiate a process leading to inclusion of international expert in the review panels.

Comments: Since 2009 the ACSUG has compiled information on international experts and now has an updated database of international experts. The inclusion of international experts in the ACSUG committees will begin in the degree follow-up panels in 2011.

ESG 2.6 - Follow-up procedures and ESG 2.7 - Periodic reviews

Recommendation: ACSUG should consider the possibilities and the advantages for the follow-up process of the involvement of external experts. They could bring relevant issues regarding the universities improvement plans and the development of the subsequent measures.

Comments: When the ENQA review panel carried out the ACSUG external evaluation in 2009, because of recent legislative changes in Spain (commented in the evaluation

reports), it was starting a new methodology for evaluating university degrees. In this process, the degree first has to pass an evaluation prior to its implementation; then it has to do a yearly follow-up activity and then an accreditation process (in graduate degrees after 6 years and in Master's degrees after 4 years).

Since 2009, the ACSUG has been able to plan the evaluation, follow-up and accreditation of degrees in the Galician University System. This allows the ACSUG to monitor all of the activity and establish improvements in the evaluation procedures. In the following tables there is a summary of the evaluations carried out:

EVALUATION PRIOR TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSITY DEGREES

2009

SUBJECT BRANCH	GRADUATE	MASTER	TOTAL
Arts and Humanities	8	9	17
Sciences	4	6	10
Health Sciences	7	7	14
Social and Legal Sciences	28	19	47
Engineering and Architecture	4	9	13
TOTAL	51	50	101

Number of qualifications assessed in 2009 by Subject Branch

2010

SUBJECT BRANCH	GRADUATE	MASTER	TOTAL
Arts and Humanities	0	9	9
Sciences	1	4	5
Health Sciences	4	2	6
Social and Legal Sciences	7	8	15
TOTAL	12	23	35

Number of qualifications assessed in 2010 by Subject Branch

2011

SUBJECT BRANCH	GRADUATE	MASTER	TOTAL
Arts and Humanities	0	2	2
Sciences	0	2	2
Health Sciences	0	1	1
Social and Legal Sciences	1	7	8
Engineering and Architecture	0	5	5
TOTAL	1	17	18

Number of qualifications assessed in 2011 by Subject Branch

MONITORING OF UNIVERSITY DEGREES

With regard to the monitoring of official degrees, in 2010 the ACSUG designed a Pilot Project, in which the three Galician Universities in A Coruña (UDC), Vigo (UVI) and Santiago (USC) took part. The Pilot Project was a good experience prior to the obligatory implementation of the follow-up process since 2011.

COURSES PARTICIPATING IN THE MONITORING PILOT SCHEME 2010		
UDC	USC	UVI
3	2	4

From 2011, the evaluation by ACSUG of the yearly follow-up of Galician university degrees is compulsory. There are 400 university degrees en Galicia, whose monitoring process will be assessed by the ACSUG.

International experts are included in the external evaluation committees appointed by the ACSUG to evaluate the university degrees.

ACCREDITATION OF UNIVERSITY DEGREES

The Spanish Quality Assurance Agencies are working to design common guidelines for the accreditation process in Spain.

In Galicia, in the academic year 2012/2013, the first degrees have to be assessed by the ACSUG in relation with the accreditation activity.

ESG 3.8 - Accountability

Recommendations: The review panel recommends implementing formal and systematic mechanisms for feedback from universities submitted to assessment processes.

The panel recommends also that an ethics board is appointed to oversee the adherence with the no conflict of interest principle.

Comments: In relation to the need to establish systematic mechanisms for feedback from universities, the ACSUG agrees with the ENQA review panel in this sense.

Therefore, in 2011 the ACSUG has implemented a systematic procedure of feedback from universities and people (mainly teaching staff) evaluated by the ACSUG. Once the evaluation process is complete, the ACSUG sends an email with an online questionnaire link inside in order to receive opinions about different aspects of the processes: publicity and information provided by ACSUG about the evaluation process, clarity and transparency of the activity, adequacy of the tools to make the application, adequacy of the evaluation criteria, etc.

As regards the ethics board, the ACSUG has already this board, the Advisory Council, which, among other functions, is responsible for overseeing the transparency and independence of the ACSUG in the activities it carries out.

4) CONCLUSIONS.

The ACSUG carries out a large number of activities, and the ENQA external committee in 2009 was impressed by this, as well as the professionalism, involvement and good work of its personnel. Similarly, in several extracts from the external report, comments are also made referring to how the universities and other stakeholders connected with the university system of Galicia have stated their confidence and respect for the activities carried out by ACSUG.

Additionally, the commitment of ACSUG in ENQA activities and the effort to collaborate and take part in other international activities are basic principles in the ACSUG strategy and mission.

The ACSUG takes into account that quality improvement is not a static process, and we are going to continue fostering the quality culture between all ACSUG staff and all the stakeholders related to the university system.

And so, in closing, beyond some specific formal topics (such as the composition of the CGIACA) we believe that the ACSUG is on the right track towards implementing the ESG in the agency and in the Galician University System as a whole.