

Self-assessment report 2013

External assessment to confirm ACSUG
as full member of ENQA



ACSUG

AXENCIA PARA A CALIDADE DO SISTEMA UNIVERSITARIO DE GALICIA



SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2013

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT TO CONFIRM
ACSUG AS A FULL MEMBER OF ENQA

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1. INTRODUCTION TO AND PURPOSE OF THE EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Since its foundation, the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System (ACSUG) has considered it of vital importance to establish relationships and exchange information with other quality assurance agencies and other university related bodies, both within Spain and outside its borders. This contributes towards a continuous improvement in the work it undertakes and towards its continuing adaptation to the changing situation in higher education at all times.

With this objective in mind, in 2009 ACSUG underwent an international assessment process conducted by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in accordance with the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.” The outcome was that ACSUG was accepted as a full member of ENQA in 2009 for a period of 5 years.

In 2011, as agreed, ACSUG sent a progress report to ENQA indicating the most significant actions it had carried out in the first two years following its positive evaluation.

The process started in 2009 is not considered an isolated step, but rather as part of an ongoing and cyclical evaluation process constantly working towards a continuous improvement.

Therefore, as part of this dynamic process and after 5 years as a full member of ENQA, a new international external assessment process has been conducted to confirm ACSUG as full member of ENQA.

This report contains the main conclusions of the self-assessment performed during the first phase of the international evaluation process. The self-assessment stage was undertaken through the participation of a working group made up of ACSUG staff, and later by gathering the opinion of the members of ACSUG bodies and other representatives of stakeholders within the Galician University System (SUG).

The fundamental mission of this report is to demonstrate that ACSUG is an agency that has made progress in making improvements to its work since the 2009 external evaluation and that it continues to comply with the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area,” and intends to continue to form part of ENQA as a full member.

2. GALICIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM (SUG)

2.1. DESCRIPTION

University education dates back to 1495 in Galicia, when the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC), one of the oldest in Spain, was founded.

With the Law 11/1989 of 20 July on the Regulation of the Galician University System (SUG), published in the Official Journal of Galicia (DOG) on 16 August 1989, the Universities of A Coruña (UDC) and Vigo (UVI) were created by splitting off and allocating them material and human resources from the USC. The three universities are state universities and are comprised of several campuses distributed as follows:

UDC: campuses of A Coruña and Ferrol

USC: campuses of Santiago de Compostela and Lugo

UVI: campuses of Vigo, Ourense and Pontevedra

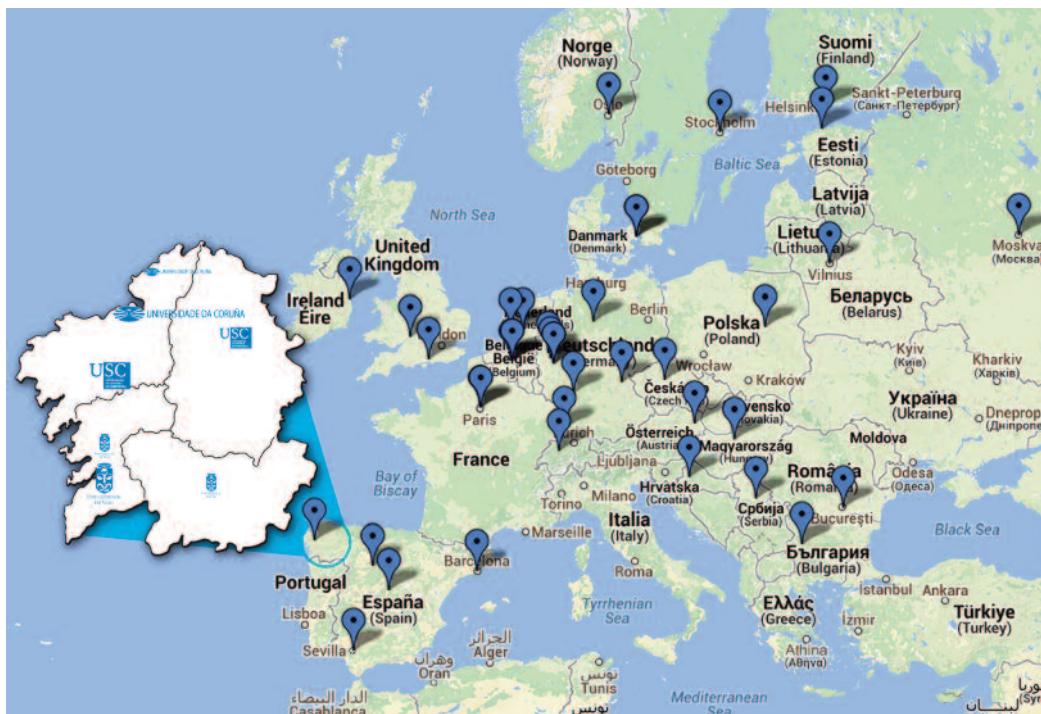


Figure 1: Distribution of the SUG university campuses

Following the enactment of the Law 11/1989, the SUG has undergone significant changes, similar to those of the rest of the Spanish University System (SUE), brought about by its geographic expansion, the growth of university activities, the introduction of the European Higher Education Area and the ever growing demands of society.

Although the Law 11/1989 was ambitious with regards to its goals and purposes, it was less so in the scope of its articulation. This fact, coupled with the new situation nationally generated by the introduction of the Organic Law 6/2001 on Universities and its amendment by the Organic Law 4/2007, made it necessary for the Parliament of Galicia to extend the laws governing university matters. Therefore, the Parliament of Galicia passed, amongst other regulations, ones of relevance for the SUG, such as the Law 7/2001 of 2 July, governing the creation and recognition of universities, university centres and the authorization of study programmes in the Autonomous Community of Galicia; the Law 1/2003 governing the social councils in the Galician University System; and the Law 2/2003 relating to the Galician University Council.

As twenty years had passed since the introduction of the above mentioned Law, and in order to respond to the current needs of society, it was necessary to update and simplify the body of laws and regulations governing university education in Galicia.

To achieve this, the Galician Parliament passed the Law 6/2013 of 13 June, governing the Galician University System, whose challenges include the consolidation of the academic system within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), attracting a wider cross-section of society and reducing the drop-out rates. They also include boosting the numbers and status of research staff, creating a clear and well defined list of rights, freedoms and obligations of the members of the university community and focusing the management of university activities squarely on the principles of efficiency and effectiveness at a time of economic difficulties both nationally and internationally.

University Education in the Galician University System

University education is divided into five academic fields: Arts and Humanities, Science, Health Sciences, Social and Legal Sciences and Engineering and Architecture.

The 1393/2007 Royal Decree of 29 October establishes the structure of university education, which is divided into three cycles known as Graduate, Master and Doctorate (PhD):

- **Graduate:** the aim is to provide students with a general education in one or several disciplines and is geared towards preparing students for the exercise of professional activities in this field. On completion of this cycle, students are awarded the corresponding Graduate Degree whose specific titles are listed in the Register of Universities, Centres and Qualifications (RUCT).

- **Masters:** the aim is for the students to acquire an advanced, specialised or multi-disciplinary learning, geared towards an academic or professional specialisation or towards beginning a career in research. On completing this cycle students are awarded a University Masters Degree with a specific title as listed on the RUCT.

- **Doctorate (PhD):** the aim is to train students in advanced research techniques, which may incorporate courses, seminars or other research based educational activities. The programme also involves the preparation and presentation of the doctoral thesis consisting of an original piece of research. On completing the above learning, students are awarded a PhD in a subject field listed on the RUCT.

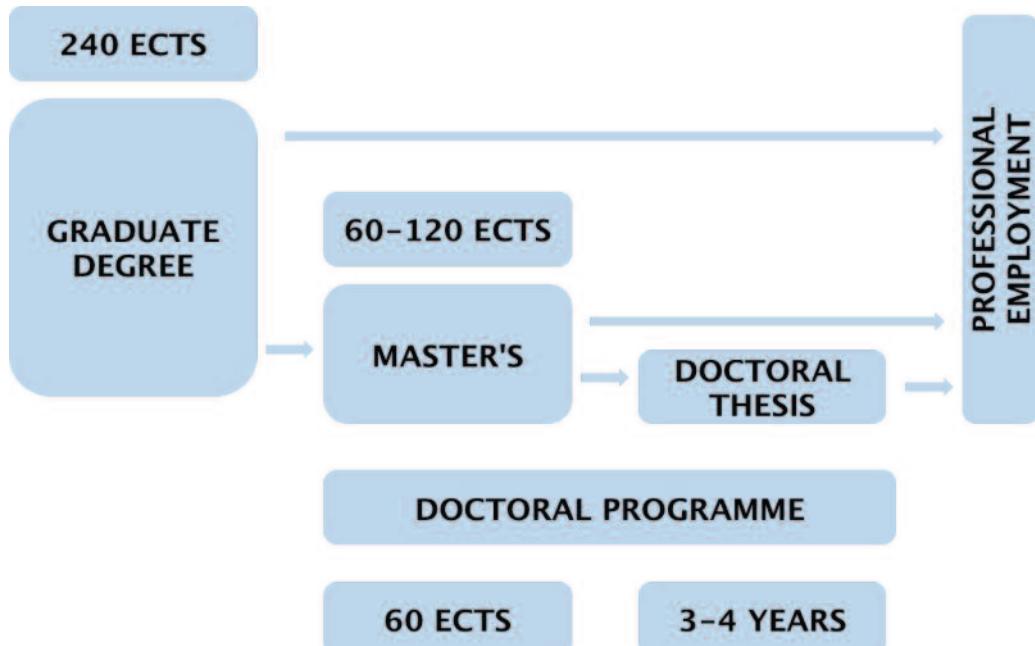


Figure 2: Structure of University Education

The academic programmes offered by the university system of this Autonomous Community are wide-ranging and diverse. In the 2013/2014 academic year the following courses are taught: 130 graduate degrees, 202 masters and 117 doctorates.

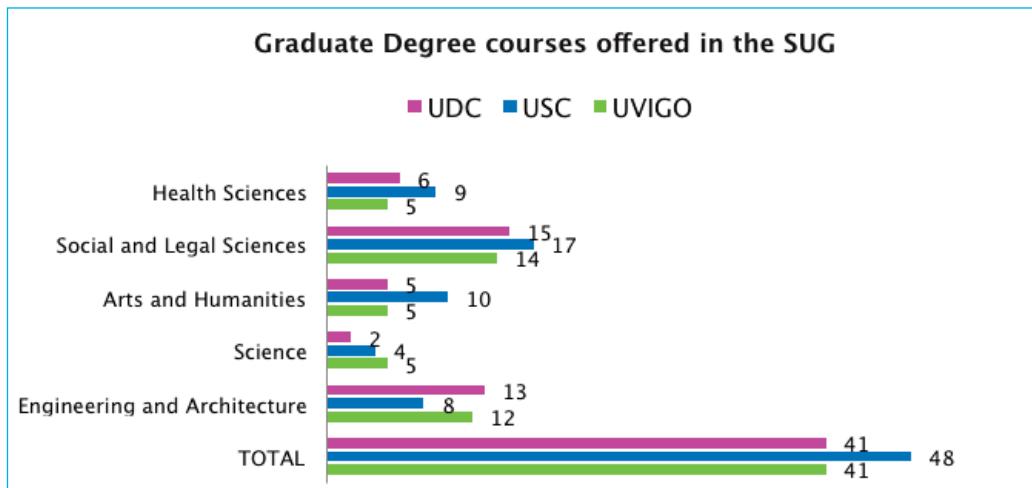


Figure 3: Graduate Degree courses offered in the SUG, overall and by subject field

(Source: SUG universities)

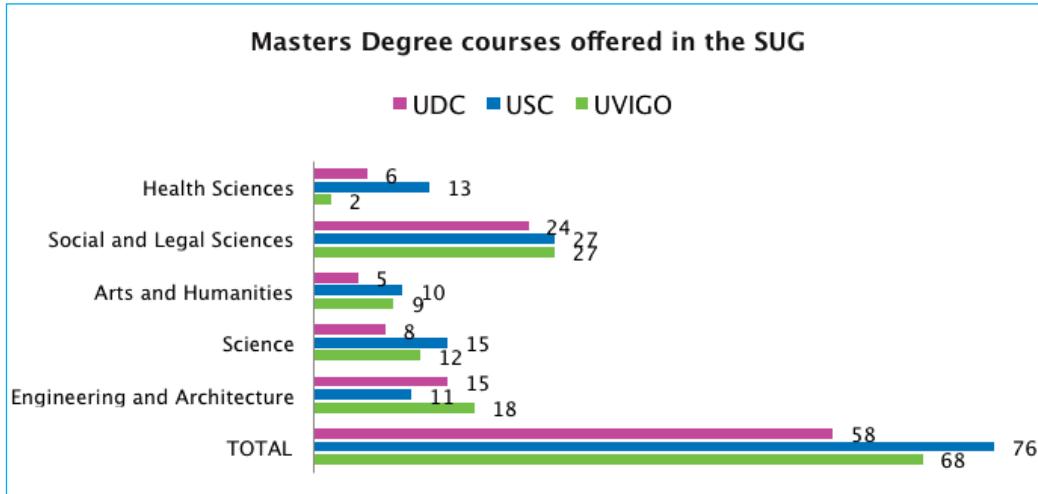


Figure 4: Masters Degree courses offered in the SUG, overall and by subject field

(Source: SUG universities)

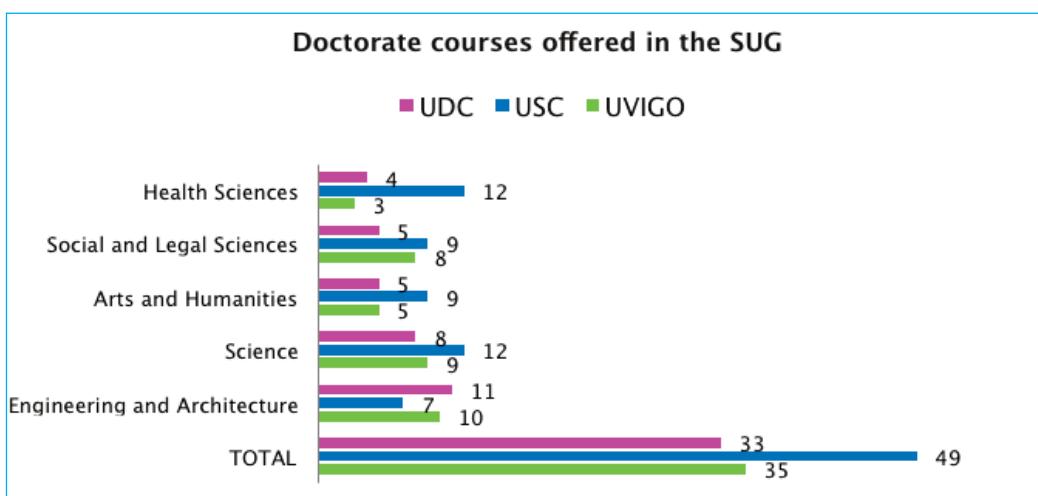


Figure 5: Doctorate (PhD) courses offered in the SUG, overall and by subject field

(Source: SUG universities)

Below, the graphs show the number of students enrolled and the number of graduate, master's and doctorate qualifications from the 2007-2008 to 2012-2013 academic course, as well as Teaching and Research Staff (TRS), Administrative and Services Staff (ASS) and annual budget of the universities.

In recent academic years a gradual fall in student enrolment on graduate degree programmes and a rise in enrolments on masters and doctorate programmes have been observed in the three Galician universities.



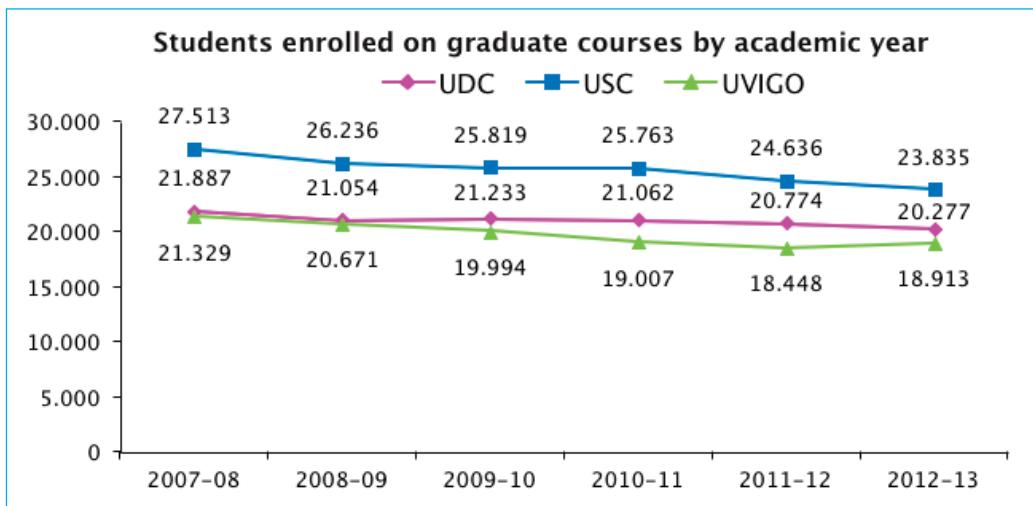


Figure 6: Students enrolled on graduate courses in the SUG

(Source: SUG universities)

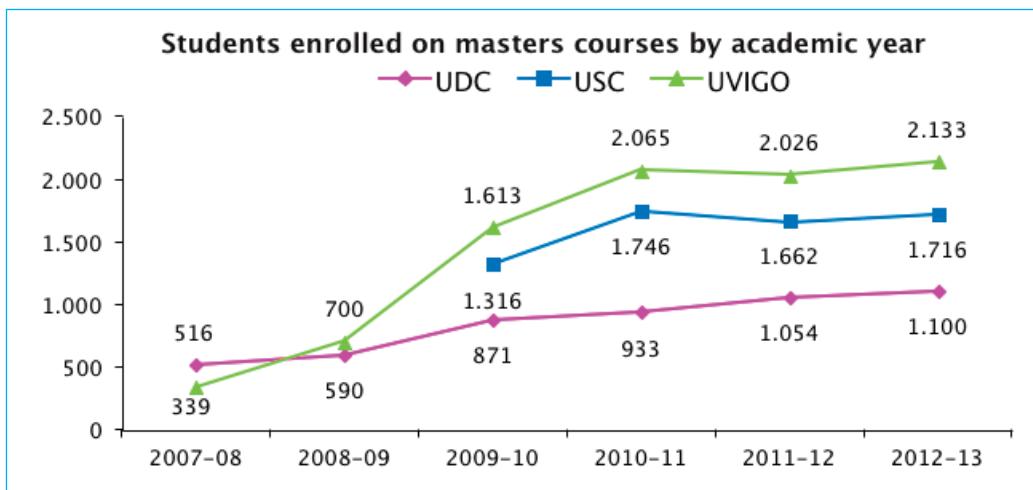


Figure 7: Students enrolled on masters courses in the SUG

(Source: SUG universities)

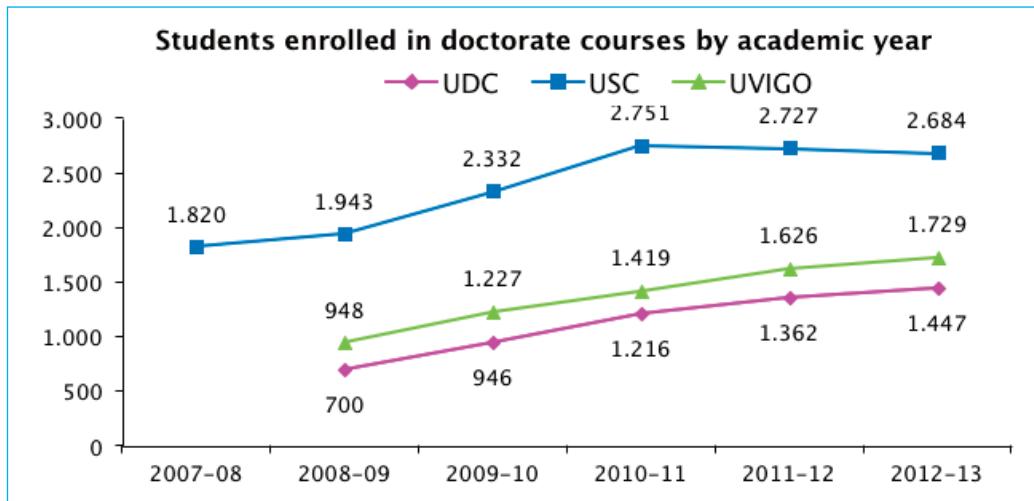


Figure 8: Students enrolled on doctorate courses in the SUG

(Source: SUG universities)

The following graphs show the change in the number of degree, master's and doctorate graduates in the three Galician universities.

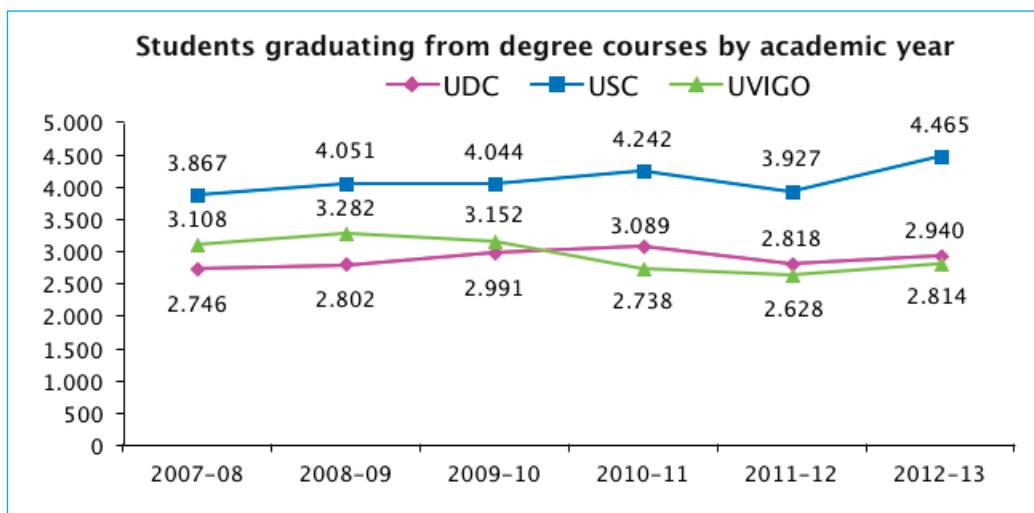


Figure 9: Students graduating from degree courses in the SUG

(Source: SUG universities)

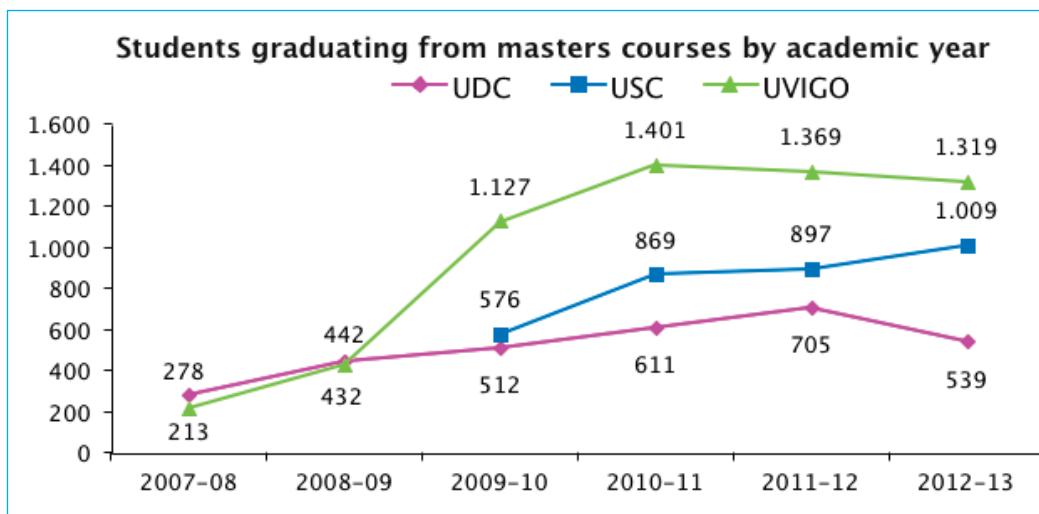


Figure 10: Students graduating from masters courses in the SUG.

(Source: SUG universities)

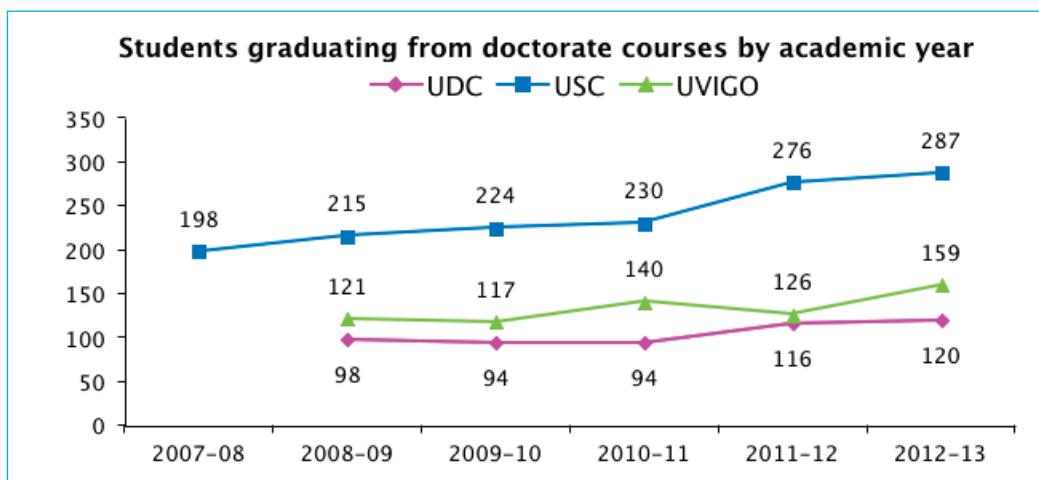


Figure 11: Students graduating from doctorate courses in the SUG

(Source: SUG universities)

The number of TRS and ASS has remained stable in recent years.

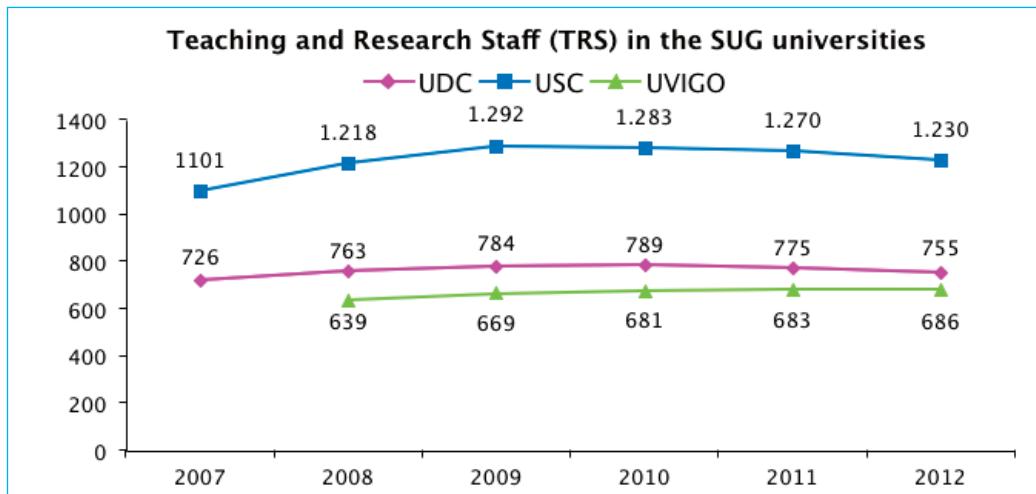


Figure 12: Teaching and Research Staff (TRS) in the SUG universities

(Source: SUG universities)

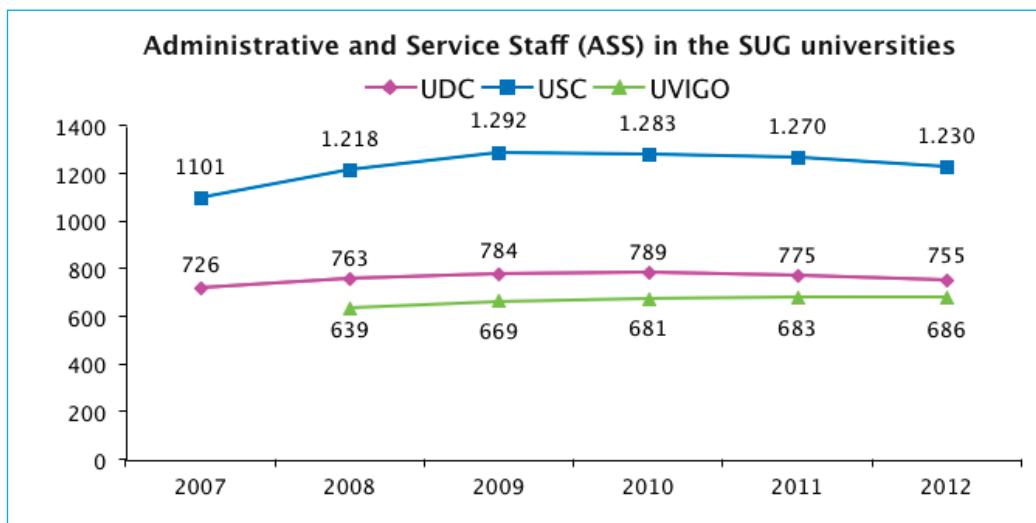


Figure 13: Administrative and Service Staff (ASS) in the SUG universities

(Source: SUG universities)

Over recent years a reduction in the annual budget has been observed in all three universities.

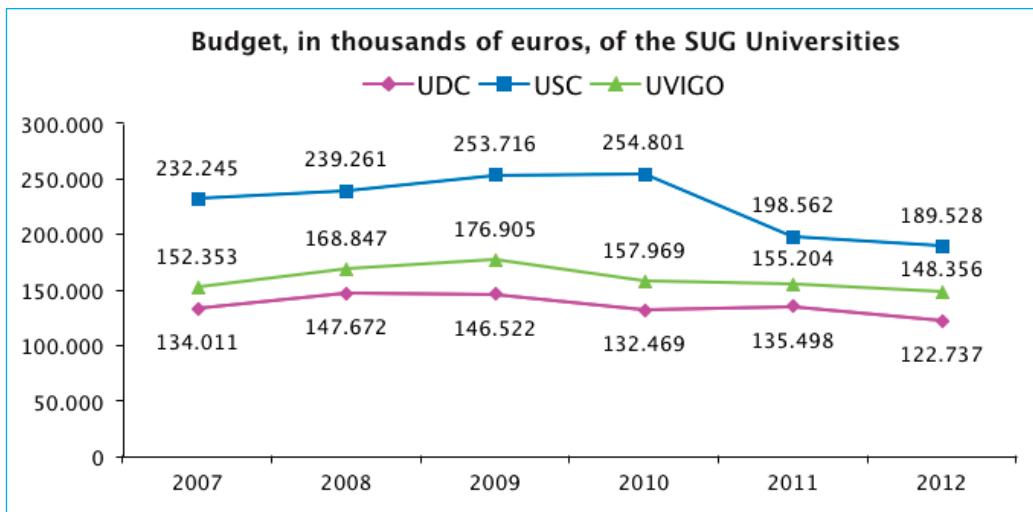


Figure 14: Budget Settlement presented by the Universities

(Source: SUG universities)

EVIDENCES

Evidence 1: Law 6/2013 of 12 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG)

Evidence 2: Royal Decree 1393/2007 of 29 October, laying down the regulation of officially recognised university education, amended by Royal Decree 861/2010

Evidence 3: Royal Decree 99/2011 of 28 January, which regulates officially-recognised doctorate teaching

2.2. ALLOCATION OF COMPETENCES IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM ACCORDING TO GALICIAN AND SPANISH LEGISLATION

The allocation of competences in higher education between the Spanish state and the various Autonomous Communities of which it is comprised, has gradually been established within the framework set out in articles 148 and 149 of the Spanish Constitution, and according to the extent to which the Statutes of Autonomy are adopted in each Autonomous Community.

According to article 149.1 of the Spanish Constitution, the State has exclusive competence over scientific and technological promotion and coordination and over the regulation of the conditions for obtaining, issuing and homologation of academic and professional

qualifications. The State is also responsible for approving the regulatory framework for the development of article 27 of the Constitution, in order to ensure full compliance with the obligations of the public authorities in this area.

The regulatory framework for developing these Constitutional precepts introduced by the Spanish State is the Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December on Universities amended by the Organic Law 4/2007 of 12 April.

In its Statute of Autonomy (Organic Law 1/1981 of 6 April), the Autonomous Community of Galicia (article 149.1.3 of the Spanish Constitution) assumed full competences in higher education, without affecting the limits laid down in the above mentioned articles 27 and 149.1 of the Spanish Constitution.

The primary law in Galicia governing these competences is the recently passed Law 6/2013 of 13 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG). Article 3 of this Law sets out that the Galician University System comprises the University of A Coruña, the University of Santiago de Compostela and the University of Vigo, notwithstanding any other university that may be legally created by the Parliament of Galicia in the future. Article 53 of the LSUG indicates that it is the Regional Government of Galicia, through the department responsible for university affairs, which is responsible for coordinating the Galician universities, the terms and purposes of which are limited by article 54 (planning the improvement of university quality, centre creation and implementation, modification and elimination of officially recognised courses, inter-university cooperation in study programmes, research, innovation, etc.).

Article 69 of the LSUG lays down that ACSUG is the body with jurisdiction over quality assessment within the Autonomous Community of Galicia, including the powers referred to in the LSUG, in the LOU and any other powers that may be assigned to it through the legal system.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that nationally, just as in the Autonomous Community of Galicia, practically all other Autonomous Communities have taken on, through their respective autonomous community statutes, the competences for higher education affairs.



Of the 17 Spanish Autonomous Communities, 10 have set up their own autonomous evaluation agencies, three of which, in addition to ANECA and ACSUG, are full members of ENQA.



Figure 15: Quality Assurance Agencies in the Autonomous Communities of Spain

EVIDENCES

Evidence 1: Law 6/2013 of 12 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG)

Evidence 4: Spanish Constitution of 1978 (art 149.1.15^a and art 149.1.30^a)

Evidence 5: Autonomous Community Statutes (art. 31 of Organic Law 1/1981 of 6 April)

Evidence 6: Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December, on Universities, amended by Organic Law 4/2007 of 12 April

3. AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE GALICIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM (ACSUG)

3.1. OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS

ACSUG was created in 2001 with the aim of enabling the SUG to achieve prestige and recognition within the context of university education in Spain, Europe and worldwide. ACSUG has been one of the first university quality assurance agencies to be established in Spain- before national legislation introduced the requirement to do so- as a response to the pledge by Galician universities and the Regional Government of Galicia to improve the quality of its university system. Today, it is the key instrument in promoting and evaluating quality in the Galician University System.

Law 6/2013 of 13 June, governing the Galician University System (LSUG) lays down in article 69 that the overriding goal of the ACSUG is to further the improvement of quality in the Galician University System.

Therefore, the LSUG itself assigns ACSUG the powers to issue reports and conduct assessments, certification and accreditation as set out in the Spanish Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December, on Universities.

The work of ACSUG could be classified into the following functions:

- Develop coordination between the Galician universities and between these and other institutions in matters of quality assurance.
- Evaluate the quality of institutions, centres and education leading to officially recognised qualifications and own qualifications, taught by universities and university centres of higher education.
- Evaluate the quality of the SUG university teaching staff, as well as develop policies that lead to an improvement in the quality of their work.
- Evaluate the quality of the research undertaken in the SUG.
- Conduct surveys and analyses of the labour market integration of university graduates from the SUG.
- Draft quality assessment reports for the universities, the education authorities, social and economic organisations and society in general.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 1: Law 6/2013 of 12 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG)

Evidence 6: Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December, on Universities, amended by Organic Law 4/2007 of 12 April

Evidence 7: ACSUG Statutes of 10 December 2008

3.2. STRUCTURE AND OPERATION

ACSUG's institutional structure consists of the governing and management bodies, consultative bodies and assessment bodies.

ACSUG's governing and management bodies comprise the President, the Board of Directors and the Director.

The Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA), as the supreme assessment body, and the Advisory Council as its consultative body, are also permanent ACSUG bodies.

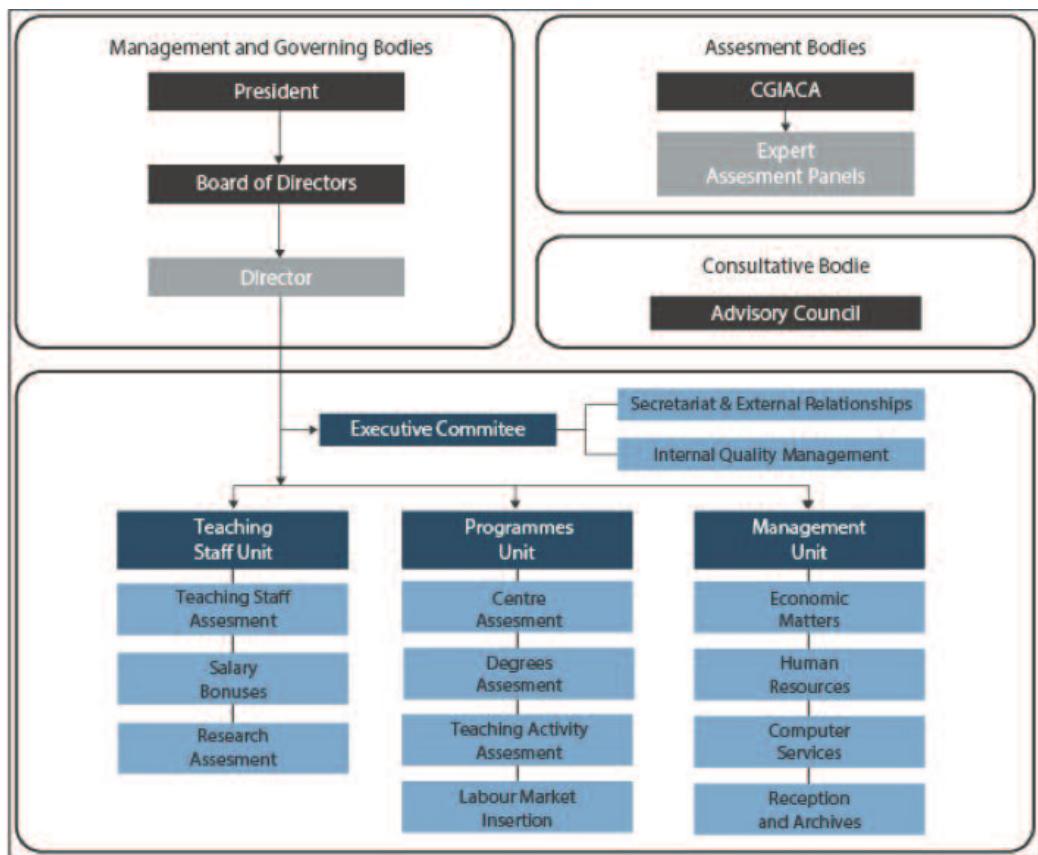


Figure 16: ACSUG organisation chart

- **The ACSUG President**

S/he is the institution's highest representative. He or she is appointed by the Council of the Regional Government of Galicia from amongst people of recognised standing in the university field.

The functions of the President include calling and chairing Board Meetings, steering the discussions and casting the deciding vote in the case of a tie vote. S/he must also work to ensure the ACSUG goals are attained and the statutes are complied with.

• Board Of Directors

This is ACSUG's highest governing and management body. Its tasks include: approving the annual schedule of activities, adopting the most appropriate measures for improving the organisation and operation of ACSUG and approving the ACSUG budget and its annual accounts.

The members of the Board of Directors include the ACSUG President, SUG universities and Regional Government of Galicia representatives, notable members of the academic, scientific and business communities, SUG students and the President of the CGIACA, as well as the ACSUG Director.

• The ACSUG Director

The ACSUG Director is the executive body. S/he manages, organises, administers and oversees all ACSUG activities, in accordance with the Board of Directors' guidelines.

The Director is appointed by the head of the department responsible for university matters, approved by the Board of Directors, and should meet the requirements regarding competence, professionalism and experience.

• Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA)

The CGIACA is the highest assessment body of ACSUG and operates with complete independence. It is responsible for issuing reports and for the evaluation, certification and accreditation tasks assigned to ACSUG, which are covered by article 7 of its Statutes. It also performs similar functions in the area of university quality assurance, which may be assigned to it by the Board of Directors or by any applicable law or regulations.

The CGIACA acts entirely independently from any other body or institution, adopting the final decisions regarding the functions assigned to it, and it has ultimate responsibility (article 23.1 of the Statutes).

The CGIACA members act in a personal capacity and entirely independently (article 22.4 of the Statutes). The CGIACA is composed of six members of recognised standing in the academic and scientific community who are appointed by the Board of Directors based on parameters of competence, experience and international recognition.

The head of the Government department responsible for universities nominates the Chair at the proposal of the Board of Directors. The ACSUG Director acts as secretary, without voting rights.

The planned new ACSUG Statutes intend to introduce the following changes to this body:

- The number of members is increased from 6 to 8, admitting international members and guaranteeing the presence of a representative from the business community and a university student.
- The CGIACA shall appoint a secretary who, when s/he is not appointed from amongst its members, shall attend meetings without voting rights.

The CGIACA appoints various panels of experts to carry out its functions.

The operational framework, the various evaluation procedures and protocols, reports and certifications approved and the regulations governing its composition, operational system, and the requirements and procedures for appointing the panels of expert assessors, approved by the CGIACA, are all publicly available.

• **The Advisory Council**

The Advisory Council is the ACSUG's advisory body and is in charge of analysing and deliberating on the operation and the activities carried out by ACSUG. Its functions include resolving any controversies that may arise in relation to the compliance of ACSUG's procedures and actions with the regulations, the Code of Ethics and the Code of Good Practice¹.

Currently the Advisory Council is chaired by the Director of the ACSUG², and is comprised of between six and ten members appointed by the Board of Directors from persons of acknowledged prestige in scientific, academic and business fields, either nationally or internationally. The members should be from outside the Galician University System and the presence of business representatives and Galician university students must be guaranteed.

The planned new ACSUG Statutes intend to introduce the following changes to this body: the Advisory Council will not be answerable hierarchically to the ACSUG Director and therefore its chairman shall no longer be the ACSUG Director. The Director may attend its meetings but shall not have a vote in the decisions adopted.

OPERATIONAL/FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE

On an operational/functional level, ACSUG has the following departments:

• **Cabinet of Direction**

This is primarily responsible for ACSUG's external relations, for supporting the expert assessment panels, and for the monitoring and continuous improvement of the internal quality at ACSUG.

• **Programmes Unit**

This is primarily responsible for verifying, monitoring, amending and accrediting official qualifications, for evaluating the design and certification of the internal quality assurance procedures adopted in the centres, for appraising centres outside the Spanish University System (SUE), for developing the university teaching staff appraisal programme (Docentia Programme), and for the labour market integration surveys of SUG graduates.

¹In any event, as previously mentioned, the ultimate responsibility for the decisions adopted in relation to reporting, assessment, accreditation and certification lies with the CGIACA.

²The president of the Advisory Council is the ACSUG Director. At every meeting of the Advisory Council a presentation of the activities during the year is made, and any questions regarding its activities are answered. The Director then leaves the room while the members of the Advisory Council analyse and make recommendations for improving ACSUG's activities.



- **Teaching Staff Unit**

This is responsible for the appraisal of university teaching staff prior to their recruitment, the assignation of salary bonuses linked to the individual merits of the tenured lecturers and temporary lecturers. It also analyses and monitors R&D+i capabilities within the universities and other tasks related to the appraisal of university teaching staff and research groups assigned to ACSUG through agreements.

- **Management Unit**

This unit comprises the departments responsible for supporting the rest of the units, including general services, required to enable ACSUG to properly carry out all its tasks.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 7: ACSUG Statutes of 10 December 2008

Evidence 8: The proposal for the new ACSUG Statutes

3.3. ACTIVITY 2009-2013

3.3.1. Quality assurance in the institutions and programmes

Since 2009, ACSUG has been evaluating the quality of officially recognised qualifications through its various programmes. It also appraises the design and implementation of the quality assurance systems in the university centres.

The graduate, master's and doctorate qualifications are required to undergo several quality assurance processes, which take place cyclically:

- 1) Verification of the qualification proposal before it is authorised.
- 2) Annual monitoring after its introduction.
- 3) Accreditation four years after the introduction of master's and six years after the introduction of graduate degrees and doctorates.

2009	2010	2011.	2012	2013	2014
ANECA Verification Agreement	Verification of qualifications				
	Amendments to qualifications				
	Qualification monitoring pilot scheme	Qualification monitoring			
				Qualification accreditation pilot scheme	Certification pilot scheme for IQAS im- plementation
				Certification pilot scheme for IQAS im- plementation	Certification of IQAS im- plementation

Table 1: Temporary allocation of the activities relating to quality assurance in the institutions and programmes

Verification

Before introducing a new qualification, Spanish universities must submit the proposal of the syllabus for prior evaluation to a Spanish agency which is a member of ENQA and EQAR. ACSUG has the legal attributes and the technical competencies to issue the prior evaluation reports in order to verify officially recognised courses in Galicia. Once the qualification has been verified, the Autonomous Community of Galicia must grant authorisation for its introduction, based on its established programming criteria and the availability of funding. Authorised qualifications are registered on the Register of Universities, Centres and Qualifications (RUCT) in the Government Department responsible for universities before it can be taught.

The purpose of the verification is to ensure new courses are developed in accordance with the EHEA criteria, the qualifications framework and that the competences and the course content are consistent with each other, in accordance with the study plans of the different disciplines.

The adaptation of the qualifications to the EHEA began in October 2007 with the publication of the Royal Decree 1393/2007 that assigned ANECA the responsibility for the verification evaluation process. In 2009 ACSUG, as a full member of ENQA, signed a partnership agreement with ANECA in order to share this competence.

Subsequently, the amendment to the Royal Decree 1393/2007 in 2010 assigns ACSUG, as a member of ENQA and EQAR, full powers to conduct the verification of officially recognised degree, master's and doctorate courses in Galicia.

Since 2009, ACSUG has verified a total of 424 qualifications:

Degree Qualifications						
University	2009	2010	2011.	2012	2013	TOTAL
UDC	24	11	0	0	1	36
USC	22	19	0	0	0	41
UVI	24	14	0	0	0	38
Total	70	44	0	0	1	115

Table 2: Number of degree qualifications verified by ACSUG

Master's						
University	2009	2010	2011.	2012	2013	TOTAL
UDC	26	5	10	10	4	55
USC	57	11	3	4	12	87
UVI	51	14	8	1	10	84
Total	134	30	21	15	26	226

Table 3: Number of master's degrees verified by ACSUG

PhD			
University	2012	2013	TOTAL
UDC	1	15	16
USC	1	42	43
UVI	1	23	24
Total	3	80	83

Table 4: Number of doctorate degrees verified by ACSUG

Monitoring the implementation

Following the provisions of the current legislative framework, once the teaching programmes for the officially recognised qualifications registered on the RUCT are in place, the evaluation bodies conduct a monitoring process to ensure the study programme verified by the University Council is delivered. The monitoring process therefore encompasses the period from the moment the course is introduced until the time the qualification is submitted for evaluation for the renewal of its accreditation (with the cycle starting once again after its renewal).

This process analyses the information each university makes publicly available about its qualifications, an appraisal of its compliance with the established project and the results obtained, identification of good practice, deviations and decision making, and finally any actions carried out as a result of the recommendations set out in the final verification report, amendments and subsequent monitoring reports.

In 2010, ACSUG launched its official qualifications monitoring programme with a pilot scheme. Since then, it has monitored 291 qualifications, publishing the results in the “*Report on the monitoring process of officially recognised degree and master's qualifications*”:

QUALIFICATIONS MONITORED BY ACSUG														
		2011					2012					2013		
BRANCH	CYCLE	UDC	USC	UVI	TOTAL	UDC	USC	UVI	TOTAL	UDC	USC	UVI	TOTAL	
Arts and Humanities	Degree	0	0	1	1	2	9	5	16	5	8	4	17	
	Master's	0	0	0	0	1	7	7	15	2	3	2	7	
Sciences	Degree	0	1	1	2	1	4	4	9	2	3	4	9	
	Master's	0	0	0	0	1	12	5	18	0	0	3	3	
Health Sciences	Degree	1	0	0	1	4	2	2	8	4	2	2	8	
	Master's	0	0	0	0	3	8	1	12	0	2	0	2	
Social and Legal Sciences	Degree	1	1	0	2	8	9	5	22	11	8	13	32	
	Master's	1	0	1	2	8	16	18	42	1	2	4	7	
Engineering and Architecture	Degree	0	0	0	0	8	3	5	16	2	1	1	4	
	Master's	0	0	1	1	6	7	17	30	1	3	1	5	
TOTAL		3	2	4	9	42	77	69	188	28	32	34	94	

Table 5: Qualifications monitored by ACSUG

Modifications

Universities may make amendments to their qualifications as a result of the monitoring process. If these amendments involve alterations to the structure, the nature or the goals of the qualification, this must be resubmitted for a new verification process. With regard to the rest of the amendments, ACSUG assesses the proposals presented by the universities and issues a report, which is either favourable or unfavourable to the changes.

Since 2011, ACSUG has verified amendments to a total of 142 qualifications:

	Modifications								
	2011		2012		2013		TOTAL		
University	Degree	Master's	Degree	Master's	Degree	Master's	Degree	Master's	
UDC	6	9	3	1	14	4	23	14	
USC	4	5	40	11	2	3	46	19	
VIGO	4	7	8	14	6	1	18	22	
TOTAL	14	21	51	26	22	8	87	55	

Table 6: Amendments evaluated by ACSUG

Accreditation

After the qualification has been implemented, it has to be submitted for evaluation to renew its accreditation. This process ascertains whether the syllabus has been implemented in accordance with the initial plan and a visit by external assessors is made to check this. This evaluation is performed every four years for master's degrees and every six years for degree and doctorate qualifications.

In 2013 a moratorium of two years was approved, at national level, in order to set up the accreditation renewal system for qualifications, meaning that there will be a 2-year delay in the process.

At the end of 2013, ACSUG has introduced a pilot scheme for accreditation renewal in which 17 qualifications were involved and for which the external visit is planned for April 2014. This pilot scheme will enable us to establish whether our current tools are adequate and to introduce improvements into future processes.

	Pilot Scheme			
CYCLE	UDC	USC	UVI	TOTAL
Degree	5	4	3	12
Master's	2	2	1	5
Total	7	6	4	17

Table 7: Qualifications included in the ACSUG accreditation pilot scheme

FIDES-AUDIT

In order to guide the universities in their task of integrating all the activities related to quality assurance in teaching, and to enhance future qualification verification, amendment, monitoring and accreditation processes, in 2007 ACSUG presented the FIDES Programme to its universities. This voluntary programme aims to assist university departments in the design and implementation of internal quality assurance procedures.

Also in 2007, the AUDIT Programme was introduced to the Spanish University System. This programme had been developed jointly between ACSUG, ANECA and AQU Catalunya³. Its aim is to support the universities' initiatives designed to guarantee the quality of their educational provision and to promote a culture of continuous improvement by offering guidance to the education institutions in the design of Internal Quality Assurance Systems (IQAS).

Due to the complementary nature of the two programmes, at ACSUG they are developed, managed, assessed, implemented and certified as a single programme, known as the "FIDES-AUDIT Programme."

ACSUG published an annual invitation to the three SUG universities for the evaluation of their IQAS designs and today the systems in all the centres have been evaluated.

³Both ACSUG and AQU Catalunya are full members of ENQA.

Evaluation of the IQAS designs													
1st Assessment process:2008.			2nd Assessment process:2009			3rd Assessment process:2010			4th Assessment process:2011				
UDC	USC	UVI	UDC	USC	UVI	UDC	USC	UVI	UDC	USC	UVI	TOTAL	
22	0	11	3	8	11	0	15	2	0	5	5	82	
33			22			17			10				

Table 8: Evaluation of the IQAS designs

As a continuation of the IQAS design evaluation process, in 2013, ACSUG, together with ANECA and UNIBASQ⁴, developed and presented the Model for the Certification and Implementation of the Quality Assurance Systems, introducing a pilot scheme in which five Galician university centres have taken part: 2 from UDC, 1 from USC and 2 from UVI, of which 4 achieved favourable reports.

In November 2013, ACSUG published the first official invitation to the Certification of the Implementation of the Quality Assurance Systems, to which 12 centres have applied (6 from UDC and 6 from UVI).

EVIDENCES

Evidence 2: Royal Decree 1393/2007 of 29 October, laying down the regulation of officially recognised university education, amended by Royal Decree 861/2010

Evidence 9: European Higher Education Area legislation (Book)

Evidence 10: Support guide for evaluation prior to the verification of officially recognised qualifications (Graduate degree and Master's)

Evidence 11: Guide for the evaluation prior to the verification of doctorate programmes.

Evidence 12: Procedure for requesting Modifications to verified Graduate degrees and Master's qualifications

Evidence 13: Guide for monitoring officially recognised graduate and master's degrees

Evidence 14: Report on the monitoring processes of officially recognised graduate and master's degrees (2011, 2012 and 2013 processes)

Evidence 15: Evaluation guide for the renewal of the accreditation of officially recognised graduate and master's degrees

Evidence 16: Guide to the Assessment of the design of Internal Quality Assurance Systems for university education

Evidence 17: Guide for the certification of the implementation of Quality Assurance Systems

⁴UNIBASQ is a candidate member of ENQA.



3.3.2. Quality assurance of the teaching staff

The Spanish Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December, on Universities (LOU) makes reference in its statement of purpose, to the improvement in the quality of teaching and research of university teaching staff as one of its main priorities in its quest for University Excellence. It therefore introduces various external assessment mechanisms in order to review teaching staff activities at different stages and in various aspects of their career.

Teaching staff accreditation

On the one hand, the aim is to ensure a more objective and transparent preliminary selection process when recruiting university teaching staff in order to guarantee a minimum standard of skills, with the requirement established in the contract that they pass an accreditation procedure prior to the selection process.

Therefore, according to the applicable regulations within the Autonomous Community of Galicia, a favourable assessment by the ACSUG is required before recruitment to a number of positions (temporary lecturer, assistant lecturer, private university lecturer and previously, associate lecturer).

The assessments are conducted by a review panel of experts, and university professors, appointed for their experience in a specific academic field. These experts issue a report on the applicants' résumés, based on their score on a point scale (which is public and known by the applicants). The ACSUG developed these scales by taking account of the five major aspects of the career of a university lecturer: teaching experience, research experience, academic education, professional experience and management experience.

It is established as a general rule that an ordinary annual invitation should be made by ACSUG each year for applications for accreditation. This procedure has been taking place through successive accreditation processes since 2004. Based on the figures since 2009, more than 2300 applications have been evaluated, as shown on the table below:

Evaluation/Year	Evaluations completed
2009	609
2010	554
2011	411
2012	405
2013	416
TOTAL	2395

Table 9: Evaluations conducted in the invitations to accreditation for teaching staff

Teaching staff salary bonuses

Various incentives (salary bonuses) have been introduced for teaching, research and management work undertaken by lecturers who are in a situation of stable employment. A review of their résumés is also necessary in order for them to be accorded these salary bonuses.

One of the most important financial incentives teaching staff can earn (Decree 55/2004 of 4 March) is the bonus granted in acknowledgement of curricular excellence in teaching and research. This procedure is an overall evaluation of the curricular activities of all active tenured and temporary lecturers, whose aim is to guarantee and encourage the pursuit of excellence and to reward permanent renewal, innovation and quality in the exercise of teaching and research activities. We wish to stress that appraisal of the teaching staff is one of the criteria which should be taken into account when evaluating the quality of different universities.

The methodology applied consists of a curricular evaluation of the merits of the applicants by a panel of expert assessors and university professors, appointed for their experience in a specific academic field. They issue their reports on the applicants' résumés based on their score on a points scale. The particular aspects to be assessed include, on the one hand, the applicant's recognised five-year teaching periods and six-year research periods (basic evaluation), and on the other, an evaluation based on a scale of 12 relevant points of merit (6 teaching and 6 research merits) pre-selected by the applicant him/herself (additional evaluation).

The score obtained shall be a weighted factor when considering the overall curriculum of the applicant. Depending on the points obtained (basic evaluation plus additional evaluation) each applicant is assigned a number of scores of between 1 and 14.

This evaluation has a five-year validity and thus expires at the end of this period. This encourages university lecturers to keep continually active and up-to-date.

Evaluation/Year	Evaluations completed	Total scores awarded
2009	456	1015
2010	403	971
2011	914	1718
2012	272	755
2013	-	-
TOTAL	2045	4459

Table 10: Outcomes of the appraisal processes for salary bonuses

DOCENTIA Programme

The DOCENTIA Programme was launched in 2007 with the aim of satisfying the demands of the universities and the requirement of the education system for a model and procedures for guaranteeing the quality of tuition among the university teaching staff and for promoting their development and recognition.

This voluntary programme has been developed in a co-ordinated manner between all the quality assurance agencies in Spain and has become a benchmark for this much needed collaboration, since it was the first to be developed with the cooperation of all the quality assurance agencies.

The reference framework is to be found in standard 1.4 of the EHEA Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines where it is stated "institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that the staff involved in teaching students are qualified and competent to do so." A further important reference is to be found in Royal Decree 1393/2007 of 29 October which sets out the regulation of officially recognised university teaching and indicates that "The Quality Assurance System must have teaching staff assessment and improvement procedures in place."

All three SUG universities have participated in this programme in which their assessment procedures obtained a favourable evaluation in 2007. In the 2008-2009 academic year the implementation phase of the assessment models began, with a minimum duration of 2 years during which the agencies monitored the implementation of the models, as a prior step towards the final stage of certifying them. The current status of implementation in each of the universities is as follows:

- UDC: from 2009 to 2013 three implementation processes have taken place, making any necessary adjustments. In 2014 they are undergoing their 4th implementation process. By the end of this year their procedure is expected to be certified.
- USC: from 2010 to 2013 three implementation processes have taken place, making any necessary adjustments.
- UVI: in 2010 it underwent its first and only implementation process. Since that date it has been undertaking a review of its procedure.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 6: Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December, on Universities, amended by Organic Law 4/2007 of 12 April

Evidence 18: Autonomous Community Decree 55/2004 of 4 March establishing additional bonus payments linked to individual teaching and research merits or to the administration merits of university teaching staff

Evidence 19: Galician Parliament Law 3/2002 of 29 April, on tax and administrative systems measures

Evidence 20: Autonomous Community Decree 266/2002 of 6 September on recruitment of university teaching staff

Evidence 21: Resolution of the Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA) of 9 November 2010, approving the evaluation protocol and report for the recruitment of teaching staff by universities forming part of the Galician University System (SUG)

Evidence 22: Resolution of the CGIACA of 2 November 2010, approving the evaluation protocol and report prior to the consolidation of associate lecturers in the universities forming part of the Galician University System (SUG)

Evidence 23: Order of 16 October 2006, regulating the evaluation protocol approved by the CGIACA, regarding the criteria and procedures to apply for the appraisal and assignment of the bonuses in curricular excellence in teaching and research and in management posts

Evidence 24: Guide for evaluation of the DOCENTIA designs

Evidence 25: Guide for evaluation of the implementation of the DOCENTIA designs

Evidence 26: Certification process for the DOCENTIA models

3.3.3 Labour Market Integration

In 2001, ACSUG launched a project for monitoring the Labour Market Integration of graduates from the Galician University System. In view of the importance of the topic and the results obtained in the first survey, the programme has become an established annual activity at ACSUG.

The primary aim of these surveys is to provide support to the universities, providing results, which due to their nature, can contribute towards the development of strategies for reviewing and improving the quality of university education, minimising the gap between the learning objectives and professional requirements and employability. In addition, they provide reference information to the various stakeholders: future and current students, employers, authorities and society in general.

At the start of this initiative, the target population of the survey consisted of university graduates in diplomas/degrees/engineering. This has expanded to include graduates in their final year, stemming from the process of adapting to the EHEA. The methodology employed and the sample size of these surveys allows us to obtain results for the Galician University System as a whole, and for each university, branch of knowledge and qualification. The results obtained about the labour market integration process and satisfaction with their education by SUG graduates include some key indicators, such as the degree of labour market integration, the most popular job seeking methods, the average time before finding the first qualification-related job, the most highly valued factors in finding employment, the competencies gained through the degree qualification, as well as others.



Diplomas/Graduates/Technical engineering/Engineering/Architecture /Architect Technician/Degrees					
Graduate cohorts	Year survey made	Population	Sample	% Surveyed	Year of publication of results
1996-2001	2002-2003	56,471	5,293	9.37%	2004
2001-2003	2004	23,700	4,145	17.49%	2006
2003-2005	2007	23,108	7,967	34.48%	2008
2005-2006	2008	10,280	5,362	52.16%	2009
2006-2007	2009	8,689	4,569	52.58%	2010
2007-2008	2010	9,216	4,830	52.41%	2011
2008-2009	2011	8,846	4,965	56.13%	2013
2009-2010	2012	8,922	5,004	56.09%	2014
2010-2011	2013	9,289	5,114	55.05%	Forecast 2014

Table 11: Surveys conducted amongst SUG graduates of diplomas/ degrees/ engineering technician/ engineers/ architecture/ architecture technician

In 2013, the scope of the labour market integration surveys was extended to master's degrees graduates from the 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 academic years. The data obtained completed the existing data about the labour market integration of all SUG graduates.

Officially recognised Master's					
Graduate cohorts	Year survey made	Population	Sample	% Surveyed	Year of publication of results
2007-2008	2013	473	348	73.57%	2014
2008-2009	2013	867	633	73.01%	2014
2009-2010	2013	1644	1261	76.70%	2014

Table 12: Surveys conducted amongst SUG official Master's graduates

In addition, ACSUG has conducted two one-off surveys on access to the labour market for university graduates:

- “The demand for graduates amongst SMEs in Galicia”, which analyses employers' opinions on which skills are most in demand amongst Galician businesses when employing university graduates.

-“The employment status of IT Engineers in Galicia”, which analyses the professional situation of SUG IT Engineering graduates and IT Engineering Technicians through a survey conducted in 2010.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 27: List of agreements

Evidence 28: Publications on labour market integration

Title	Year published
“Programme for Labour Market Integration for Galician University System Graduates 1996-2001”	2004
“Survey of labour market integration for Galician University System Graduates 2001-2003”	2006
“The demand for graduates by Galician SMEs”	2007
“Access to the labour market: A study by qualification 1996-2003”	2008
“Survey of labour market integration for Galician University System Graduates 2003-2005”	2008
“Survey of labour market integration for Galician University System Graduates 2005-2006”	2009
“Survey of labour market integration for Galician University System Graduates 2006-2007”	2010
“The employment situation of IT Engineers in Galicia. Volume I: IT Engineering”	2010
“The employment situation of IT Engineers in Galicia. Volume II: Technical Engineer in IT”	2010
“Survey of labour market integration for Galician University System Graduates 2007-2008”	2011
“Survey of labour market integration for Galician University System Graduates 2008-2009”	2013
“Survey of labour market integration for Galician University System Graduates 2009-2010”	2014
“Survey of labour market integration of graduates of officially recognised master’s degrees in Galician University System 2007-2008, 2008-2009 & 2009-2010”	2014

3.3.4. Research evaluation

The Galician Research, Innovation and Growth Plan 2011-2015 (I2C Plan) approved by the Regional Government of Galicia, is operational from 1 January 2011 until 31 December 2015.

The main goal of this strategic plan is to promote quality research and the development of strategic innovation undertaken mainly by universities and research centres. The aim is to plough back into society the outcomes of this quality research so that it is reflected in efficient and competitive business growth.

ACSUG is involved in the evaluation of the various applications by appointing the members of the panel of expert assessors. The assessors agreed on the scoring criteria at the Agency's offices. When the evaluations were complete, the results were forwarded to the selection committee of the regional Department of Culture, Education and University Regulation,

which prepared the resolution proposal based on the terms of the competition, the evaluations themselves, the availability of resources and the organisation, consolidation and coordination objectives that gave rise to the process.

The various processes to have been developed include:

Programme to support the Post-Doctorate period

This programme's purpose is to boost the incorporation of research staff into the Galician R&D+i system via two different channels: Method A and Method B, which in an initial phase, foster international mobility to widen researchers' experience and enable their subsequent reincorporation into the SUG.

I2C Plan Post-Doctorate Training (2011-2015)	
Method A	
Assessment process	No. assessments completed
2012	234
2013	196
TOTAL	430

Table 13: Evaluations completed under Method A

I2C Plan Post-Doctorate Training (2011-2015)	
Method B	
Assessment process	No. assessments completed
2012	26
2013	28
TOTAL	54

Table 14: Evaluations completed under Method B

Assistance for the consolidation of research units

The conditions for applying for assistance through a competitive process are annually approved within this programme. Grants are available to assist the most competitive research units of the SUG in their consolidation, structuring and specialisation processes.

Grants for the consolidation and structuring of competitive research units in the Galician University System	
Assessment process	No. assessments completed
2010	85
2011	50
2012	73
2013	126
TOTAL	334

Table 15: Evaluations completed for the consolidation and structuring of competitive research units

Assistance for emerging researchers' projects

This assistance is provided for projects of researchers under 41 years of age who, after completing post-doctorate research training programmes, are establishing their research teams and defining their distinct areas of research with respect to the groups from which they originated.

Grants for research projects undertaken by emerging researchers in the Galician University System	
Assessment process	No. assessments completed
2012	132
2013	49
TOTAL	181

Table 16: Evaluations completed of research projects of emerging researchers

Isidro Parga Pondal Programme

Previous to the I2C Plan, the Galician Research, Development and Technological Innovation Plan-Incite (2006-2010) existed, which offered training to researchers on the Human Resources Programme. One of these initiatives was the Isidro Parga Pondal Programme, assisting PhDs with proven post-doctoral training to incorporate into public research bodies. Any SUG university that offered any of the projects or areas of research related to the process and who promoted the recruitment of research staff selected for this process could benefit from this grant.

In 2010 ACSUG assisted in the evaluation of the Isidro Parga Pondal Programme grants, in which 83 applicants were evaluated.

Various extensions to the programme were later appraised, as shown in the following tables:

1st Extension to the Isidro Parga Pondal Programme	
Assessment process	No. assessments completed
2010 (1st extension to the 2007 award)	24
2011 (1st extension to the 2008 award)	20
2012 (1st extension to the 2009 award)	18
TOTAL	62

Table 17: 1st Extension to the Isidro Parga Pondal Programme

Evaluation of the researchers of the Isidro Parga Pondal Programme (awarded 4 years earlier) for the “compliance certificate”

Assessment process	No. assessments completed
2010 (awarded 2006)	49
2011 (awarded 2007)	24
2012 (awarded 2008)	17
TOTAL	90

Table 18: Researchers of the Isidro Parga Pondal Programme (awarded 4 years earlier) for the “compliance certificate”

EVIDENCES

Evidence 29: Galician Research, Innovation and Growth Plan 2011-2015 (I2C Plan)

3.3.5. National and International Cooperation Activities

ACSUG’s admission into ENQA as a full member in 2009 was a turning point and provided a huge boost to both domestic and international collaborative activities.

Below, we discuss some of the most significant actions in this area during the 2009-2013 period:

1) Nationwide partnership activities

1.1. REACU: ACSUG belongs to the Spanish Network of University Quality Assurance Agencies (REACU) set up in 2006, in which all the agencies of the Spanish Autonomous Communities take part and where they discuss matters affecting all of them. ACSUG occupied the role of secretary of the organisation in 2009, and from late 2010 to early 2011 it co-ordinated a comparative study amongst all the Spanish agencies.

1.2. CURSA: ACSUG is one of the four Autonomous Community agencies forming part of CURSA (University Committee for the Regulation of Monitoring and Accreditation of University Qualifications), in which four Autonomous Community education departments, five vice-chancellors, the Spanish Director General of Education and two other officials from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport also form part. This committee plays a vital role in the design and introduction of the methodology for evaluating official university qualifications.

1.3. Assessments at the University of Oviedo: the University of Oviedo has signed a number of agreements with ACSUG whereby the latter undertakes several assessment processes:

- **Assesment of the University of Oviedo’s own califications:** in 2009 and 2010, under this agreement, ACSUG conducted an evaluation of the proposals the university presented of its Own Postgraduate Qualifications. ACSUG appraised 8 qualifications in 2009 and 13 in 2010.

- **Teaching staff appraisal at the University of Oviedo:** to comply with the Agreement signed between ACSUG and the University of Oviedo in 2009, ACSUG has been conducting the appraisals of candidates prior to issuing the reports evaluating the individual merits of non-permanent and internal Research staff at the University of Oviedo.

Evaluation of six-year periods of the teachers at the University of Oviedo	
Assessment process	No. assessments completed
2009	38
2010	9
2011	23
2012	30
2013	8
TOTAL	108

Table 19: Evaluation of six-year periods of the teachers at the University of Oviedo

- **Evaluation of the research teams at the University of Oviedo:** based on the agreement signed between ACSUG and the University of Oviedo in 2013, during that year ACSUG conducted, for the first time, the appraisals of the research applicants in order for them to gain recognition as research teams at the University of Oviedo. During the 2013 process, 15 applications were evaluated.

1.4. Programme for the promotion of teaching and research staff at the University of Vigo: the University of Vigo has a special teaching and research staff promotion programme through which an annual assessment process takes place to assign permanent teaching staff places to each department, taking account of applicants' teaching, research and management merits. In compliance with the agreement signed in 2008, the agency conducts the appraisals of the curricular merits of the researchers taking part in these annual appraisal processes.

Vigo TRS	
Assessment process	No. assessments completed
2008-2009	53
2009-2010	37
2010- 2011	25
2011-2012	33
2012-2013	17
TOTAL	165

Table 20: Appraisals completed of Vigo TRS

2) International partnership activities

2.1. ENQA: ACSUG was already a candidate member of ENQA in 2007, and following its admission as a full member in 2009, ACSUG intensified its collaboration with this international organisation, participating in a number of surveys and publications:

- Mapping the implementation and application of the ESG (MAP-ESG Project): ACSUG took part in this study, providing information in 2011.

- Publication of the quality assurance results in the European Higher Education Area: ACSUG took part in this study, providing information in 2011.

- Quality procedures project “Visions for the future”: ACSUG took part in this study, providing information in 2011.

- “Transparency of European Higher Education through public quality assurance reports” (EQArep): ACSUG took part in this study, providing information in 2013.

- Since 2012 ENQA has been publishing newsletters periodically, providing a channel through which its members can share relevant information about Higher Education in Europe. ACSUG takes part in this and has published news of its work in 3 of the 6 newsletters.

ACSUG also regularly attends the workshops organised by ENQA:

- Members’ Forum and Annual General Assemblies: in addition to its regular collaboration in the review of documents and methodologies discussed in these meetings, in 2010 the ACSUG Director presented to one of these meetings the labour market integration surveys that ACSUG undertakes.

In addition, our staff participates in the following work groups coordinated by ENQA:

- a) Internal Quality Assurance Group (IQA Group): the mission of this group, created in 2008, is to share their practical experience in management systems and internal quality and to promote collaboration between the agencies in this matter. In 2010, an example of good practice presented by ACSUG at one of the annual meetings of this group was considered amongst some of the best presented. In 2011 and 2012 ACSUG was involved in one of the group’s publications on performance indicators.

- b) Working group for the impact of quality assurance: set up in 2012 with the primary aim of examining the benefits of implementing quality assurance procedures in higher education in Europe.

- c) Working group on the involvement of the stakeholders of the university system in the quality assurance procedures: set up in 2012 in order to analyse the current situation and to foster the participation of the various groups involved in higher education in Europe (students, graduates, academic staff, business leaders, etc.).

2.2. EQAR: ACSUG became a member of EQAR in 2010, following another examination and quality appraisal by this body, which based the evaluation on the information from the external evaluation process conducted in 2009 by ENQA.

ACSUG is currently working on a study created by EQAR, by the name of Recognising International Quality Assurance Activity in the EHEA (RIQAA) and is invited to a seminar on this topic on 29 and 20 April 2014 in Bayreuth (Germany).

2.3. ECA: in 2013 ACSUG applied and was accepted to become a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA), a body comprising European quality assurance agencies who wish to be involved in the mutual recognition of the activities each undertakes and in the shared learning and exchange of good practice in higher education matters. A technical officer from ACSUG is participating in one of the working groups set up by ECA, Working Group 1, the Mutual Recognition and Joint Programmes group.

2.4. CANQA: ACSUG participated in a European Union Tempus project related to the Central Asian Quality Assurance and Accreditation Network (CANQA) over the period 2009-2012, assisting with the introduction of Quality Management Systems in the countries of this region.

In relation to this project, in 2009, 16 representatives from Central Asian countries attended a week-long training workshop organised by ACSUG in Santiago de Compostela, which was taught by international experts and ACSUG staff.

An ACSUG technical employee subsequently continued to assist on the project, reviewing the documents prepared by the universities of Central Asia and giving presentations at various training days which were held in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in 2009 and 2010.

During the final phase of the process, in 2012, the ACSUG employee formed part of the panel of international experts making an evaluation visit to two universities in Tajikistan.

2.5. Evaluation of university centres outside the Spanish University System: since 2009 ACSUG has been required to perform the evaluation of the quality of overseas universities. After signing the corresponding partnership agreements, it is evaluating the quality of university centres in Peru, where it has already evaluated 9 centres of the University of San Martín de Porres (USMP) and 4 centres of the Néstor Cáceres Velásquez Andina University (UANCV). We are shortly to begin the evaluation of a further 11 centres at this university.

ACSUG was also contacted by other Peruvian universities, such as the San Luis Gonzaga de ICA National University (UNICA) with whom we have signed a framework agreement, and a training workshop was held at ACSUG in 2013, which was attended by 15 representatives from this university.

2.6. Other international collaboration: here we can mention other areas in which we have collaborated or participated internationally:

- Attendance at the European Quality Assurance Forums (EQAF). At the 2009 forum, ACSUG, ACSUCYL and AQU jointly gave a presentation on the “Experiences in the use of ISO 9001 in order to comply with the European Standards and Guidelines in the three Spanish Agencies.” At the 2010 forum, ACSUG, together with ANECA and ACSUCYL presented a paper on the DOCENTIA Programme.

- Participation in the “Development of Competences in the World of Work and Education



(DECOWE)” conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2009 with the presentation of the paper “Labour Market Insertion of the Galician University System Graduates.”

- Participation in the “Modelling and Measurement of Competencies in Higher Education” conference in Berlin in 2011 with the presentation of the poster entitled “Labour Market Insertion of the Galician University System Graduates. Competencies required in current employment.”

- Participation in the “New Perspectives for Master Study Programmes in Europe” international conference, as part of the Nexus Project organised by “the conference of Rectors and Presidents of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in Germany”, Berlin 2011.

- Participation in the INQAAHE Conference 2011, “Quality Assurance: Foundation for the Future”, in Madrid 2011, with the presentation of the following papers: “Quality Assurance in Institutions of the Galician University System” and “Professional Masters Degrees, an analysis of practical training.”

- Attendance at the “9th International Forum on the Evaluation of Quality in Research and Higher Education (FECIES)”, Santiago de Compostela 2012, presenting the following papers: “Continuous improvement of the teaching guides through the evaluation of competencies. An on-line tool”; “Evaluation of the perception of the acquisition of competencies on-line. A tool for the continuous improvement of teaching guides”; “Analysis of the DOCENTIA Programme in Spanish universities”; “The use of information technology as a tool for monitoring officially recognised qualifications”; “Monitoring officially recognised qualifications: Good practice identified”; and the posters “Labour market integration of Galician University System Graduates.”

- Attendance at the “10th International Forum on the Evaluation of Quality in Research and Higher Education (FECIES)”, Granada 2013, presenting the following papers: “Analysis of the command and relevance of cross-curricular and professional competencies for students in the final year of a degree course”; “Comparative analysis between the perception of the development of specific competencies and the command acquired by students in the 4th year of the Children’s Education Degree at the University of A Coruña”; “Actions which improve the quality of qualifications. Good practice in officially recognised qualifications in the engineering and architecture fields”. It also participated in the symposium “Employability as a criterion for choosing a degree course and the elimination of qualifications” and presented the posters “Analysis by branch of knowledge of the results obtained in labour market integration surveys of Galician University System graduates.”

EVIDENCES

Evidence 27: List of agreements

Evidence 30: Link on the ACSUG website to its international activities

Evidence 31: Link on the ACSUG website to its workshops



4. SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS UNDERTAKEN

4.1. SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In November 2013 ACSUG and ENQA signed the protocol and terms of reference for the external evaluation process to confirm ACSUG as a full member of ENQA.

The self-assessment process at ACSUG was conducted as described below:

- a) In November 2013 an analysis was made prior to the self-assessment process of timescales, actions to be undertaken, etc.
- b) In December 2013 the structure of the self-assessment report was approved and the report drafting team was appointed, comprising ACSUG staff who are specifically related to the area to be covered in the report.
- c) During December 2013 and January 2014 the report drafting team began to prepare the report and in the first week of February 2014, the first full draft was completed and was submitted for examination by the entire ACSUG staff.
- d) After making the necessary amendments, a new draft version of the report was issued that was sent to the members of the ACSUG bodies: Advisory Council, Board of Directors and CGIACA for their review and analysis.
- e) The same draft was also sent to a number of ACSUG assessors belonging to external panels for the various activities, including academic representatives, students and the business sector.
- f) The self-assessment report was finally approved at the end of February.

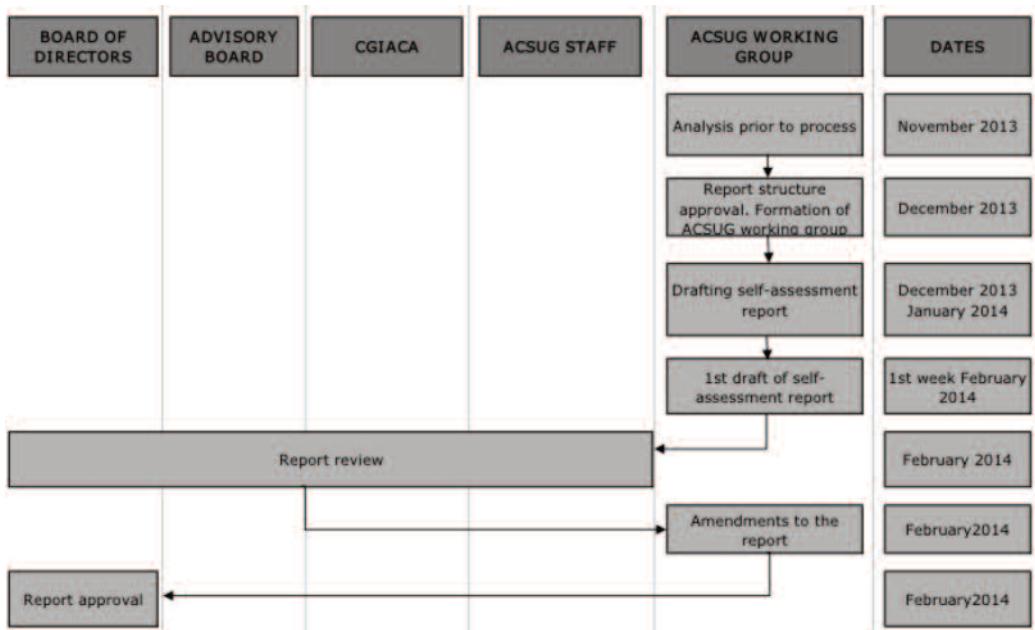


Figure 17: Stages in the self-assessment process

4.2. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2009 EXTERNAL REVIEW

ACSUG was accepted as a full member of ENQA in November 2009 following the completion of the external review. As a result of this process, some recommendations were made that ACSUG needed to take account of when carrying out its work. As required, ACSUG sent to ENQA in November 2011 a progress report with the most important changes made and the actions undertaken over the two years.

Below are the recommendations made by ENQA and the actions undertaken by ACSUG in relation to them:

STANDARD	ENQA RECOMMENDATIONS
ESG 2.4 - The procedures must be fit for purpose	ACSUG should initiate a procedure to include international experts in its assessment panels.
ESG 2.6 - Monitoring procedures	ACSUG should consider the possibility and benefits of monitoring its activities with the participation of external experts. They may be able to offer relevant information on introducing improvements and the most appropriate actions.
ESG 3.6 - Independence	In relation to the highest evaluation body, CGIACA: Representatives from outside Galicia, business people and students should be present in the CGIACA.
	With regards to the Advisory Council, to allow this body to conduct it business constructively and critically, it is recommended that the ACSUG Director not be the chair of this body.
	The ACSUG Director may attend the meetings of the Advisory Council, but s/he must leave the meeting when the Advisory Council makes its decisions and recommendations.
ESG 3.8 - Accountability procedures	The external assessment panel recommends that formal and systematic mechanisms are put in place for communication with the universities about the evaluation processes.
	The panel recommends that an Ethics Council be appointed to ensure there is compliance with the avoidance of conflicts of interest.

Table 21: Recommendations of the ENQA external report in 2009 and the actions undertaken by ACSUG

Standard: ESG 2.4 - The procedures must be fit for purpose

Recommendation: ACSUG should initiate a procedure to include international experts in its assessment panels.

Actions undertaken: since 2009, ACSUG has been collating information about possible international assessors, mainly those with knowledge of Spanish. It has a database of 40 assessors, and 2 international assessors have been included on an experimental level on the assessment panels for qualifications, with the intention of gradually including these assessors on the rest of the panels.

In addition to this step, ACSUG has sought out assessors from both Galicia and the rest of Spain who have international experience in evaluation, projects and research.

All the academic members of the Advisory Council, both Spanish and international, have international experience, with periods of work in other universities, and participation in evaluation and research with an international scope.

All the current member of the CGIACA have also spent periods of training in overseas universities and research centres. In the new statutes, awaiting approval, it is also laid down that they should be selected “from amongst notable members of the academic and scientific community, both nationally and internationally.”

Standard: ESG 2.6 - Monitoring procedures

Recommendation: ACSUG should consider the possibility and benefits of monitoring its activities with the participation of external experts. They may be able to offer relevant information on introducing improvements and the most appropriate actions.

Actions undertaken: the participation of external experts in all of the evaluation processes that ACSUG carries out is deemed to be essential for the proper undertaking of its activities, not only in the initial evaluations of the processes, but also in their subsequent monitoring.

Therefore, since 2010, panels of external assessors are involved in the process of monitoring qualifications. They examine the actions undertaken by the universities until the qualification accreditation process is conducted (see report of activities in section 3.3 herein).

In addition, since 2006, ACSUG has been recording the opinion of its assessors after their involvement in the evaluation process has come to an end. This information is very important for ACSUG, helping it to make continuous improvements to the processes it carries out.

Since 2013, a system for monitoring the assessors has been implemented. As such, once they have finished their work as expert assessors in the evaluation process, ACSUG appraises their work through a questionnaire, examining several aspects: capacity for teamwork, appropriateness of the evaluations, adherence to the guidelines and parameters of the process.

This information is taken into account in future assessor selection processes alongside the general and specific criteria affecting each particular activity.

Standard: ESG 3.6 - Independence

Recommendation: with regards to the composition of highest evaluation body, CGIACA, representatives from outside Galicia, business people and students should be present in this body.

Actions undertaken: ACSUG is in the process of changing its statutes. A draft of the new statutes was presented to the Board of Directors on 20/12/2013.

The new statutes lay down that the CGIACA will be composed of:

- a) The Chairperson, to be appointed by the head of the department to which ACSUG is assigned, from amongst individuals of recognised prestige in the universities of Galicia, at the proposal of the Board of Governors of ACSUG.
- b) Eight members elected by the ACSUG Board of Governors from amongst distinguished members of the national and international academic and scientific community.

Amongst its members the participation of a representative from the professional or business community with proven experience in evaluation procedures and a university student are guaranteed.

Standard: ESG 3.6 - Independence

Recommendation: with regards to the Advisory Council, to allow this body to conduct its business constructively and critically, it is recommended that the ACSUG Director not be the chair of this body.

Actions undertaken: ACSUG is in the process of changing its statutes. A draft of the new statutes was presented to the Board of Directors on 20/12/2013.

The new statutes lay down that the ACSUG Director may be a member of the Advisory Council without voting rights and may not be the chair of this body.

Standard: ESG 3.6 - Independence

Recommendation: the ACSUG Director may attend the meetings of the Advisory Council, but s/he must leave the meeting when the Advisory Council makes its decisions and recommendations.

Actions undertaken: the Advisory Council began its work in 2010 and during the annual meetings of this body in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 the ACSUG Director, despite officially being the chair of the Advisory Council, attended only to explain the activities carried out during the year in question and to answer any questions posed by other members of the body. The Director then leaves the meeting leaving the rest of the members of the Advisory Council to discuss the activities and make recommendations. The secretary of the Advisory Council is a technical officer of ACSUG, who attends the meetings without a vote and who takes notes of the meetings in order to draft the minutes.

Standard: ESG 3.8 - Accountability procedures

Recommendation: the external assessment panel recommends that formal and systematic mechanisms are put in place for communication with the universities about the evaluation processes.



Actions undertaken: since 2012, ACSUG has been recording the opinion of the applicants participating in the teaching staff evaluation processes. Following the completion of the evaluation process, the applicants are sent an email with a link to a questionnaire where they can anonymously give their opinion about the process.

This same procedure has been implemented in order to gather the opinions of the coordinators of the qualifications evaluated. The process was rolled out for the first time in January 2014.

These procedures for measuring satisfaction and consulting the opinion of the users of the ACSUG evaluation processes have been standardised in order to apply them after each evaluation process, as discussed in section 5.8 of this report.

Standard: ESG 3.8 - Accountability procedures

Recommendation: the panel recommends that an Ethics Committee be appointed to ensure there is compliance with the avoidance of conflicts of interest.

Actions undertaken: in 2010, ACUSG's Advisory Council was set up and amongst its functions it includes that of ensuring transparency and resolving any controversies that may arise with regards to the compliance of ACSUG's procedures and actions with the standards and Code of Ethics and of Good Practice.



5. ANALYSIS OF THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

5.1. COMPLIANCE WITH PART 2 OF THE EUROPEAN STANDARDS FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

5.1.1. Standard 2.1. Use of internal quality assurance procedures in higher education

Standard:

The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Guidelines:

The standards for internal quality assurance in Part 1 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assurance. It is vital that the internal policies and procedures in place in the institutions are meticulously appraised during the external processes to establish the degree of compliance with the standards.

If the higher education institutions are able to demonstrate the efficiency of their internal quality assurance processes, and that these processes sufficiently ensure quality standards, the external processes could be less intensive than if the opposite were the case.

Compliance with the standard

The external quality assurance activities carried out by ACSUG take into account the European standards and guidelines regarding internal quality assurance within higher education institutions (part 1 of the standards).

The assessment and analysis activities are planned and performed in order to assist educational institutions meet the internal quality assurance criteria. The underlying objective is to enable the institutions to improve their internal control processes, which will undoubtedly lead to a quality improvement across the SUG as a whole.

The following table shows the relation between the activities and the European standards and guidelines on internal quality assurance within institutions of higher education (part 1 of the standards).

EHEA quality assurance standards (Part 1)	ACSUG Activities								
	Verification of qualifications	Qualification monitoring	Qualification accreditation	Research evaluation	FIDES-AUDIT	DOCENTIA	Teaching staff accreditation	Teaching staff salary bonuses	Labour Market Integration
1.1.Quality assurance policies and procedures	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1.2.Periodic approval, control and review of programmes anawards	X	X	X		X				X
1.3.Student assessment	X	X	X		X				
1.4.Teaching staff quality assurance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
1.5.Student learning resources and suport	X	X	X		X				
1.6.Information systems	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
1.7.Public information	X	X	X	X	X	X			X

Table 22: ACSUG activities in relation to the standards for internal quality assurance in higher education institutions

EVIDENCES

Evidence 32: Guides, handbooks and reports on the evaluation programmes published on the ACSUG website

Evidence 33: Files on the operating processes of the ACSUG Management System

Evidence 34: Annual reports (website link)

5.1.2. Standard 2.2. Development of external quality assurance processes

Standard:

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published together with a description of the procedures to be used.

Guidelines:

To ensure clarity of purpose and transparency in the procedures, the external quality assurance methods should be developed and implemented through a process which involves all the players concerned, including higher education institutions. The procedures eventually agreed upon must be published and include explicit statements of their purposes and goals, as well as a description of the procedures to be used.

Since the external quality assurance processes make demands of the institutions concerned, a preliminary evaluation should be made of its impact to ensure that the procedures to be adopted are the appropriate ones and that they do not interfere with the day-to-day work of the higher education institutions.

Compliance with the standard

In its final meeting of each year, the ACSUG Board of Directors approves the activities planned for the following year.

ACSUG considers the role of all the parties involved in the activities should be made clear during their presence at the ACSUG Board meetings, where they have an opportunity to express their opinion on the activities proposed.

In addition to setting up the various evaluation processes, meetings are held with university representatives to agree on the guidelines and tools to be used.

ACSUG organises also informative meetings for universities management teams, degree and master's qualifications coordinators and quality assurance coordinators, in which the different programs of evaluation are presented. As an example, in the first week of November 2013, it was presented to the three Galician universities , the Programme for the Accreditation Renewal of degree and master's qualifications, together with the Programme of the Certification of the IQAS Implementation, and the Results of the 2011, 2012 and 2013 degree and master's monitoring processes.

During these workshops, the attendees were also informed about the start of the 2013-2014 qualification Accreditation Pilot Scheme in which 6 centres from the three SUG universities will participate. Also presented was the publication "Legislation on the European Higher Education Area" which will be a useful tool for supporting everyone involved in the development and implementation of the officially recognised university qualifications. The ACSUG is also preparing (in DTP stage) a volume covering the guidelines and tools of the

various qualification and centre evaluation processes to assist Galician universities when referring to this documentation.

The activities which are eventually approved are published on the ACSUG website where they are explained in detail, and include a description of the procedures and documentation to be used, the planning process and the intended outcomes of the activities.

In addition to publishing the activities on its webpage, the ACSUG establishes the most appropriate communication channels (email, informative/training workshops, etc.) for informing all the parties involved in each particular activity.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 31: Link on the ACSUG website to its workshops

Evidence 32: Guides, handbooks and reports on the evaluation programmes published on the ACSUG website

Evidence 33: Files on the operating processes of the ACSUG Management System

Evidence 34: Annual reports (website link)

5.1.3. Standard 2.3. Decision making criteria

Standard:

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria and applied consistently.

Guidelines:

Formal decisions adopted by the quality assurance agencies have a huge impact on the institutions and programmes evaluated. In order to maintain even-handedness and reliability, the decisions must be based on published standards that are interpreted in an accountable way. The conclusions should be based on the evidence gathered and the agencies should have the means necessary to amend these conclusions if deemed necessary.

Compliance with the standard

The ACSUG publishes on its website, with sufficient notice, the guides, tools, documentation and criteria applicable to external quality assurance activities. Consequently, the subject or institution to be assessed is aware in advance of the nature of the procedure and of the course it will take.

The role of the assessors and external experts is particularly important in the assessment process. A management and selection procedure for assessors therefore exists, which pays special attention to their training and knowledge in relation to their assessment tasks, and assures their objectivity and the absence of any conflict of interest. Those assessors whose profile matches the previously established criteria are selected for the activity concerned. The



external assessors sign a non-disclosure agreement and accept the stipulations of the ACSUG code of ethics.

In order to increase the transparency of the process, the ACSUG evaluation panels are published on our website.

The assessors' conclusions and decisions are subsequently examined and reviewed by the highest evaluation body of ACSUG, the CGIACA, which issues a final resolution, and throughout the entire process ACSUG staff ensures that it objectively adheres to the established terms and criteria.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 32: Guides, handbooks and reports on the evaluation programmes published on the ACSUG website

Evidence 35: Resolution of 30 September 2009, regulating the management procedures for expert assessors approved by the Galician Commission for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA)

Evidence 36: Non-disclosure agreement model

Evidence 37: Code of Ethics

Evidence 38: Database of assessors (website link)

5.1.4. Standard 2.4. Processes fit for purpose

Standard:

All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their suitability to achieving the aims and objectives set for them.

Guidelines:

Quality assurance agencies within the EHEA carry out a variety of external processes for different purposes and following different methods. It is of vital importance that the agencies apply procedures that meet the previously defined and published purposes. Nevertheless, experience has shown that some elements used extensively in the external review processes not only help to ensure their validity, reliability and usefulness, but also provide a basis for the European Dimension of quality assurance.

A few of these elements worth mentioning include:

- the insistence that experts who conduct the external quality assurance activities have the right profiles and that they should be sufficiently competent to perform their duties;
- a careful selection of experts;
- the provision of information and training sessions based on the needs of the experts;
- the incorporation of international experts;

- student participation;
- a guarantee that the review procedures used provide sufficient evidence to support the arguments and conclusions;
- the use of a review method that includes self-assessment/external visit/draft report/published report/monitoring;
- the acknowledgement of the importance of institutional fine-tuning and improvement policies as a fundamental factor of quality assurance.

Compliance with the standard

The activities are developed and planned to comply with the ACSUG established overall objectives, always focused on their practical application within the SUG, seeking to involve all stakeholders and respecting its mission and vision.

While the activities are being carried out their compliance with the previously established guidelines is monitored and the conclusions are reported in the annual reports.

With regard to the work and the management of the assessors, special importance is placed on the assessors' profiles and their impartiality, the absence of conflicts of interest and on each assessor's individual training in the activity in question. In the processes which have taken place at ACSUG, the majority of the experts have been selected from outside the SUG to ensure maximum objectivity and to avoid any conflict of interest. We must also highlight the systematic inclusion of students and business people on the qualification assessment panels, FIDES-AUDIT and DOCENTIA. One of the aspects particularly valued in the profiles of the assessors is their international experience.

The database of assessors is continually up-dated to include students and business people, as well as academic representatives, primarily from outside the SUG, and also includes data on international assessors.

With regards to assessor training we wish to highlight the following activities:

- **Workshops held on the campuses of the three Galician universities:** Training workshops were organised on several of the campuses of our three universities, all well received by the teaching staff, students and business leaders. Almost 400 people have taken part, many of whom currently assist with the evaluation of qualifications and teaching staff in other Autonomous Communities.

- **DOCENTIA Programme assessor training:** With a similar interest in training our university teaching staff in the evaluation of teaching quality, six assessor training days were organised in partnership with the universities themselves under the DOCENTIA Programme. University professors from outside the Galician region attended, together with over 100 lecturers from our three universities, as well as students.



- **Training Workshops for assessors of the FIDES-AUDIT programme:** Several training workshops were organised for assessors from outside the Galician region who participated in the assessment panels for certifying the IQAS. During these workshops, training is also given to the students from the Galician universities who took part in these processes.

- **Training Workshops for qualification evaluators:** Over recent years, ACSUG also held several training days for assessors involved in the verification, monitoring and accreditation of qualifications prior to their participation in the evaluation processes.

The assessment processes performed, consist of the prior publication of all the details of the process, a self-assessment stage, an external assessment stage, conclusions, review and follow-up of the outcome, as well as an appeals procedure. The processes conclude with the publication and distribution of the results in order to enhance the transparency of the procedures.

ACSUG considers the process of continuous improvement to be essential, as it enables the compilation of valuable information in order to perform its activities more effectively and efficiently. The internal and external feedback mechanisms and their use in the continuous improvement process are explained in section 5.8 of the report.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 31: Link on the ACSUG website to its workshops

Evidence 32: Guides, handbooks and reports on the evaluation programmes published on the ACSUG website

Evidence 33: Files on the operating processes of the ACSUG Management System

Evidence 35: Resolution of 30 September 2009, regulating the management procedures for expert assessors approved by the Galician Commission for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA)

Evidence 36: Non-disclosure agreement model

Evidence 37: Code of Ethics

Evidence 38: Database of assessors (website link)

5.1.5. STANDARD 2.5. REPORTS

Standard:

Reports should be published and should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, opinions or recommendations contained in the reports should be easy for the readers to find.

Guidelines:

To ensure the maximum benefit is derived from the external quality assurance processes, it is important that the reports satisfy the needs of their recipients. The reports are often produced for different groups of readers and this requires that close attention is paid to their structure, contents, style and tone.

As a general rule, the report's structure should include the description, an analysis (including all pertinent evidence), the conclusions, opinions and recommendations. It should include a sufficiently complete preliminary explanation that would enable a lay-person to understand the purpose of the review, its method and the criteria used when making the decisions. The key arguments, the conclusions and recommendations should be easy for the readers to find.

The reports should be published in an accessible format and should allow the recipients (both within the institutions concerned and outside them) to express their opinion on its usefulness.

Compliance with the standard

The reports published follow a structure set out by the guidelines, protocols and criteria established in advance for each process.

The reports are written using language that is clear and accessible so that they are readily understood by the various readerships the reports are intended for. This requirement is taken into account when preparing the documentation for each process.

Usually, and notwithstanding the indications of the particular protocols and procedures for each activity, the reports include:

- A presentation of the activity to enable readers to understand the purpose of the report.
- A description and analysis of the activity performed, including any relevant evidence.
- Conclusions reached, clearly indicating the consequences of this conclusion, particularly in the case of a formal resolution.
- Recommendations for improvement depending on the evaluation process concerned.

The reports resulting from the evaluation activities are published on the ACSUG website and their contents follow the guidelines and criteria pertaining to each activity. In a few cases, if other reports are available on the websites of other institutions, the site indicates how they can be accessed.



The ACSUG aims to make all the relevant information available, in so far as possible, to all interested parties, in accordance with its code of ethics, while taking account of current legislation with regards to personal data protection.

It is important to listen to the opinion of the recipients of the reports in order to establish whether they are fit for purpose. To do this, on the completion of the evaluation process, a questionnaire is sent with a list of questions about the process to enable the users to express their opinion about it. This information is analysed for its contribution towards the continuous improvement as indicated in section 5.8.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 32: Guides, handbooks and reports on the evaluation programmes published on the ACSUG website

Evidence 37: Code of Ethics

Evidence 39: Satisfaction survey results (website link)

5.1.6. Standard 2.6. Monitoring procedures

Standard:

Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action which require a subsequent action plan should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

Guidelines:

Quality assurance does not refer especially to the individual external review activities; it is rather an activity that seeks to continuously improve our work. External quality assurance does not end with the publication of the report, as it should include a monitoring process to ensure that the recommendations are properly analysed and that the required plans of action are developed and implemented accordingly. This may entail subsequent meetings with representatives from the institutions and programmes. The goal is to ensure that the areas identified for improvement are tackled quickly, prompting the rapid implementation of the improvements planned.

Compliance with the standard

When external quality assurance processes include recommendations or amendments to be made by the individual or institution undergoing the assessment, a follow-up procedure for these changes is drawn up to ensure that they are implemented. ACSUG verifies that these procedures are carried out and the changes implemented effectively.

The participation of external experts in all of the evaluation processes that ACSUG carries out is deemed to be essential in order to perform these activities properly, especially when the evaluations include the subsequent monitoring of the steps taken in the universities.

Therefore, since 2010, during the process of monitoring the qualifications after they have been positively verified and implemented, external panels of assessors exist to check the actions undertaken by the universities until the qualification accreditation process is conducted (see report of activities in section 3.3 herein).

An overall review of the processes is undertaken in order to extract useful information for improving the activities of future assessment procedures.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 32: Guides, handbooks and reports on the evaluation programmes published on the ACSUG website

5.1.7. Standard 2.7. Periodic assessments

Standard:

External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

Guidelines:

Quality assurance is not a static process, rather a dynamic one. It should be a continuous process, not something that is carried out “once in a lifetime.” It does not finish with the first evaluation or with the completion of the formal monitoring process. It needs to be reviewed periodically. The subsequent external evaluation should take account of the progress made since the previous evaluation. The processes to be applied in the external reviews must be clearly defined by the external quality assurance agency and its requirements of the institutions should not go beyond what is necessary to achieve their objectives.

Compliance with the standard

The assessment activities and processes are carried out cyclically and periodically at ACSUG. Provided the particular characteristics of the activity allow it, this involves the continuous and regular planning of the activities and the use of the information and data generated by each activity in the rest of the assessment processes to be carried out.

We wish to briefly mention some of the particular circumstances of ACSUG’s activities in this respect:

Teaching staff accreditation: this has been undertaken through annual assessment processes since 2004.

Evaluation of curricular excellence: this has been performed through annual assessment processes since 2006. This evaluation has a five-year validity and thus expires at the end of this 5-year period. This encourages university lecturers to keep continually active and up-to-date.



FIDES-AUDIT Programme: this programme has been implemented since 2007, with ACSUG being one of the first agencies to introduce it.

DOCENTIA Programme: this programme has been implemented since 2007.

Labour market integration surveys: this is one of the pioneer activities at ACSUG. They are conducted annually, without fail, since the agency was founded.

Periodic evaluation of qualifications: before 2010, ACSUG conducted the evaluation of centres, services, programmes and qualifications by applying a variety of methods (based on the legislation in force at the time), but after 2010 ACSUG took full responsibility, within the Autonomous Community of Galicia, for all the quality assurance procedures for officially recognised qualifications. All degree, master's and doctorate qualifications are required to undergo several quality assurance processes, which take place cyclically:

- 1) Verification of the qualification proposal before it is authorised.
- 2) Annual monitoring after its introduction.
- 3) Accreditation four years after the introduction of masters and six years after the introduction of degrees and doctorates.

When defining its activities, the results of previous similar activities are taken into account, and in order for this continuous improvement process to be effective, it is essential to make use of all the internal and external information feedback mechanisms described in section 5.8 of this report.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 32: Guides, handbooks and reports on the evaluation programmes published on the ACSUG website

Evidence 34: Annual reports (website link)

Evidence 40: Surveys and publications produced (website link)

5.1.8. Standard 2.8. System-wide analysis

Standard:

Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments, etc.

Guidelines:

All external quality assurance agencies compile a huge amount of information about individual programmes and/or institutions, generating a great amount of material for a structured analysis of the higher education systems as a whole. Such studies can provide valuable information about development, tendencies, emerging good practice and areas with difficulties or persistent weaknesses, thus becoming very useful tools for the development of policies for improving quality. Agencies should consider including the tasks of research and development within their activities to get the maximum benefit from their work.

Compliance with the standard

As indicated in part of the ACSUG mission statement, “ACSUG serves as a permanent instrument for collecting and channelling information between the Galician universities, other institutions and stakeholders, contributing towards the ability of the SUG to keep constantly up to date and in touch with the changing social demands.”

The ACSUG is continuously compiling a large amount of information relating to the SUG. In order to communicate and summarise all the information it holds, the ACSUG undertakes, amongst others, the following actions:

- Periodic reports of its activities, whereby the ACSUG staff write a report for the President, which is presented at each Board of Directors meeting. This report highlights some of the most significant new developments relating to ACSUG’s work since the previous Board meeting.
- Production of papers and publications on important issues in higher education.
- Report on the results of the qualification monitoring process.
- Since 2007, ACSUG has collaborated in the drafting of the Report on the status of the external quality assessment of Spanish Universities, published annually and whose aim is to provide information to society about the evaluation, certification and accreditation processes in Spain.
- Conferences and presentations given by the ACSUG Director and other staff in the relevant units to inform about various matters related to higher education.
- Preparation of an annual report of activities.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 31: Link on the ACSUG website to its workshops

Evidence 32: Guides, handbooks and reports on the evaluation programmes published on the ACSUG website

Evidence 34: Annual reports (website link)

Evidence 40: Surveys and publications produced (website link)



5.2. COMPLIANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE EUROPEAN STANDARDS FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

5.2.1. Standard 3.1. Use of external higher education quality assurance procedures

Standard:

Agencies' external quality assurance should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the procedures for external quality assurance described in Part 2 of these European Standards and Guidelines.

Guidelines:

The standards for external quality assurance included in Part 2 provide a very valuable basis for the external quality assurance procedure. The standards reflect the best practices and experiences achieved through the development of external quality assurance in Europe since the early 1990s. Therefore it is important for these standards to be included in the procedures developed by the external quality assurance agencies in the higher education institutions.

The standards for external quality assurance must constitute, alongside the standards for the external quality assurance agencies, the basis for high quality, professional and credible external assurance, for the higher education institutions.

Compliance with the standard

In the previous section of the report, comments have been made on how the standards of part 2 of the ESG are put into practice and followed. These standards are an example of good practice and provide a very valuable basis.

Therefore the European standards and guidelines for the external higher education quality assurance (part 2 ESG) are an important feature to be taken into account when planning and performing activities.

5.2.2. Standard 3.2. Official status

Standard:

Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should also comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

Compliance with the standard

The Spanish Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December on Universities, amended by Organic Law 4/2007 of 12 April (LOU), establishes (third paragraph of article 31) that the functions of assessment, certification and accreditation correspond, as well as to ANECA, to the review

bodies determined by the legislations of the Autonomous Communities within the scope of their competences.

The Galician Parliament's Law 6/2013 of 13 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG), establishes in its articles that ACSUG is appointed as the body responsible, within the scope of its Autonomous Community, for quality assurance issues, as referred to in the LSUG, in the LOU, as well as any other responsibilities to which it may be appointed by judicial order.

Temporary provision number eight of the above-mentioned LSUG states that within one year of the coming into force of that law, ACSUG will take measures to modify its statutes to what is laid out under the law, as well as any other legislation which may be applicable to it.

Therefore ACSUG has set the process to modify its statutes in motion. To this end, at its meeting of the Board of Directors on 20/12/2013, the matter was put to discussion and each one of the members received the first draft of the new statutes. The same took place at the meeting of the Advisory Council on 18/12/2013 and of the CGIACA on 04/02/2014.

Meanwhile, the statutes passed by the ACSUG Board of Directors on 14 July 2008 are in force, as published by Resolution of 10 December, 2008 (DOG, 20 January 2009).

As a result of the coming into force of the LSUG, Decree 270/2003 of 22 May regulating ACSUG, must be revised, to adapt it to the precepts of that Law. In its article 1, this Decree establishes the appointment of ACSUG, within the scope of the Autonomous Community, to assume the functions of evaluation, certification and accreditation as covered in Spanish Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December, on Universities.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 1: Law 6/2013 of 12 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG)

Evidence 6: Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December, on Universities, amended by Organic Law 4/2007 of 12 April

Evidence 8: The proposal for the new ACSUG Statutes

5.2.3. Standard 3.3. Activities

Standard:

The agencies must carry out external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.

Guidelines:

These activities can consist of assessment, revision, audit, evaluation, accreditation or other similar activities, and must be part of the central function of the agency.



Compliance with the standard

ACSUG, since its creation in 2001, has been performing activities all of which are connected to the drafting of reports, and the assessment, certification and accreditation of the activities undertaken by the Galician universities.

In section 3.3 of this report, there is a summary of the main activities of ACSUG carried out in the period 2009-2013, since the undertaking of the first self-assessment report for ENQA. As can be seen, in this five-year period, ACSUG has covered a great variety of activities relating to all the SUG stakeholders. Likewise in section 2.7, attention has been drawn to the fact that the activities are carried out on a regular basis and not as isolated activities.

In addition to the activities for external quality assurance within the scope of the SUG, we should stress the increase since 2009 in ACSUG's international scope, as has also been indicated in section 3.3 of the report.

5.2.4. Standard 3.4. Resources

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance processes in an effective and efficient manner with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Staff

Since 2008, the ACSUG staff has comprised the Director and 16 full-time employees.

There are profiles for the functions of each one of the posts, which set out both the minimum requirements for those occupying each post, and the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform the job.

Staff curriculums are updated once a year, enabling the detection of any possible deviation from their corresponding functional profile. These deviations are to be remedied through a continuous training programme which is revised each year. This training programme also aims to renew and enhance the know-how and skills of the employees. An example of this is training in the English language, which is the weak point in the staff's abilities.

Some of the features of ACSUG staff to be highlighted are the high level of education (more than 80% of personnel has at least one university degree), and experience in the position (the shortest serving member of staff has been with ACSUG for 7 years).

ACSUG considers its staff to be suitable, both in terms of number and technical ability, to manage the activities carried out effectively and efficiently.

Collaborators / expert assessors

For the various assessment processes, ACSUG collaborates with panels of expert assessors. To this end, ACSUG has an extensive and up-to-date database of assessors.

The management of the expert assessors is undertaken according to the standards established in the protocol passed by CGIACA (the highest ACSUG authority for assessment); it is here that the procedure for selection is set out and that the standards for the formation of the various assessment boards required for the different activities are defined and established.

In 2013 a total of 221 expert assessors collaborated, some of whom took part in various different assessment procedures.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The Galician University System Funding Programme (PFSUG)⁵ contains a specific entry to ensure the normal functioning of ACSUG activities. This entry is included annually in the Autonomous Community of Galicia budgets. This budget credit allows the activities assigned to the agency to be carried out.

ACSUG has other income from assessment activities requested of ACSUG and entered into through collaboration agreements (assessment of degrees and teaching staff at the University of Oviedo, assessment of various university centres in Peru, assessment of the TRS of the UVI, etc.).

ITEM	2011	2012	2013	2014 FORECAST
1.PFSUG-activities funding	1.200.000,00	1.164.488,62	1.185.925,80	1.200.000,00
2.Income from partnership agreements	45.726,06	90.906,35	54.875,74	40.000,00
3.Other income	3.949,22	3.532,58	1.048,39	8.791,96
TOTAL	1.249.675,28	1.258.927,55	1.241.849,93	1.248.791,96

Table 23: ACSUG income

The budgetary control means it is possible to find out at any given moment the cost of each one of the activities and to make the corresponding forecasts in order to achieve an efficient, responsible and balanced expenditure of the income obtained.

⁵The Galician University System Funding Programme 2011-2015 was approved on 21/12/2010 by the Government of the Autonomous Community of Galicia (through the department of University Education and Organisation, Treasury and Economy and Industry) and the universities making up the SUG (Santiago de Compostela, A Coruña and Vigo).

Below are details of the expenditure budget for the last few years:

ITEM	2011	2012	2013	2014 FORECAST
1. ACSUG BODIES	65.186,55	93.753,23	72.000,55	82.375,78
2. QUALITY ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES	509.186,04	761.812,50	707.098,77	800.405,08
2.1.Operational costs	245.629,34	228.575,22	241.319,98	246.400,36
2.2.Centre evaluation	11.330,30	718,35	12.078,18	17.781,40
2.3.Qualification evaluation	36.062,13	95.596,85	113.215,56	159.468,10
2.4. Teaching evaluation	11.563,22	31.538,74	14.602,52	43.605,00
2.5.Teaching staff assessment	92.498,29	166.574,66	75.981,44	76.800,00
2.6.R&D+ievaluation and analysis	64.990,79	161.104,05	150.524,88	155.750,00
2.7.Labour market integration surveys	47.111,97	43.126,03	83.102,00	82.650,00
2.8.Information and publishing activities	0,00	34.578,60	16.274,21	17.950,22
3. EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES	26.149,95	72.544,22	94.627,86	54.428,29
3.1.Partnerships with other institutions	8.955,23	30.492,86	71.257,48	53.478,29
3.2.Assessments outside the SUG	17.194,72	42.051,36	23.370,38	950,00
4. MANAGEMENT UNIT	308.207,01	288.687,81	302.649,25	311.582,81
TOTAL	908.729,55	1.216.797,76	1.176.376,43	1.248.791,96

Table 24: ACSUG expenditure budget

The annual accounts and the budget settlement are submitted for audit on an annual basis. Once the audit is completed, the documents are forwarded, together with the auditor's report, to the Public Accounts Department of the Galician Regional Government and to the Accounts Committee of Galicia for their information and control.

In order to make these processes transparent, the budget settlement is made public through the Annual Report.

OTHER RESOURCES

The ACSUG headquarters, ceded by the Galician Regional Government, are located on the 5th floor of the C.I.F.P. Compostela building, with the following postal address: Calle de Lamas de Abade s/n, 15702 Santiago de Compostela, A Coruña.

The offices occupy 510m², which are divided into several areas: reception, director's office, four work areas, four meeting rooms, two filing rooms and a rest area.

ACSUG has the necessary material and intangible resources to be able to undertake its functions competently. These resources are registered in the inventory of assets produced once a year and approved by the Board of Directors.

The ACSUG IT services use and maintain various IT applications to provide a support for management and assessment activities.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 41: Staff members

Evidence 42: The Galician University System 2011-2015 Funding Plan

Evidence 43: Inventory of assets

5.2.5. Standard 3.5. Mission statement

Standard:

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

Guidelines:

This statement should describe the goals and objectives of the quality assurance agencies' procedures, how work is shared out with the corresponding agents involved in the higher education, in particular with the higher education bodies, and the cultural and historic context of their work. The statement should make clear that the external quality assurance procedures are one of the agency's main activities and that there is a systematic approach in order to achieve the goals and objectives. There should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statement translates into a policy and an explicit management programme.



Compliance with the standard

There is a legal framework which establishes the ACSUG objectives and basic functions, within the context of the SUG. The legal framework comprises basically:

- Spanish Organic Law 6/2011 of 21 December, on Universities, amended by Spanish Organic Law 4/2007 of 12 April (LOU).
- Law 6/2013 of the Galician Parliament, of 13 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG).
- Decree 270/2003, of 22 May, which regulates ACSUG.
- ACSUG Statutes: The statutes currently in force were passed in 2008, although as a result of the publication of the LSUG, ACSUG is undertaking a modification of its statutes.

With this legal framework taken into account, ACSUG has a series of tools at its disposal for the development of the functions assigned to it.

a) Mission and vision

In 2008 ACSUG defined its mission and vision; to do so it carried out a process of internal analysis and reflection, both of its staff, and of the members of the bodies of which it is made up.

Mission

The key mission of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System (ACSUG) is to contribute towards the improvement of the quality of the Galician University System (SUG) for which it undertakes the activities of reporting, assessment, certification and accreditation of Galician University activities, particularly those relating to teaching, research, transfer of knowledge and management.

ACSUG also acts as a permanent instrument for gathering and channelling information between the Galician universities, other institutions and stakeholders, enabling SUG to keep constantly up to date and adapted to the changing social demands.

Vision

ACSUG intends to become a benchmark for quality assurance in Higher Education Institutions of the SUG, and is recognised in Galicia, in Spain and internationally for its independence, transparency and credibility.

Its mission and vision are published on its webpage, and are included in each of its annual activities report and also in the informational leaflets that it produces. The mission and vision are specially revised by the ACSUG Advisory Council to check that they continue to be appropriate and to serve as a basis for the activities being carried out.

b) Code of Ethics

In 2008 it was detected that the general principles and regulations for action at an ethical level which were being taken into account when undertaking activities were not actually set out in writing. Therefore an ACSUG Code of Ethics document was established, defining a set of applicable procedural regulations to reinforce the agency's commitment to continuous improvement, transparency, and excellence in its conduct and methods of operation, as well

as to the effective and efficient performance of the activities undertaken. This Code of Ethics is published on the webpage.

c) Quality and Environmental Policy

ACSUG has had an internal quality and environmental management system in place since 2006. This system is the main internal management tool and all the activities undertaken come within its scope. One of the basic features of this system is the quality and environmental policy, which describes the general guidelines and directives to be taken into account with regard to the management system, providing the appropriate framework for its performance and maintenance.

d) Quality Assurance and Environmental Objectives

With regard to the quality and environmental management system mentioned above, quality assurance and environmental objectives are established each year, and these have influence on the continuous improvement of the services provided.

e) Annual activity planning

The forecast and activity planning takes place once a year, taking account of all the above points, including the specific goals for each activity and a plan of action, and is approved at the Board of Directors' last meeting of the year.

At each of the Board's meetings a review of the activities takes place in order to verify that the proposals and initial aims are being fulfilled, to suggest improvements and amendments, as well as to propose any new activities of interest.

f) Annual activities report

An annual activities report is prepared each year, and it is published on the webpage and distributed in order to make the information available.

g) Webpage

The recently renewed ACSUG webpage is the main means of publishing relevant information, in order to deliver it to all the stakeholders related to the sphere of higher education, and to ensure transparency and credibility.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 1: Law 6/2013 of 12 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG)

Evidence 6: Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December, on Universities, amended by Organic Law 4/2007 of 12 April

Evidence 7: ACSUG Statutes of 10 December 2008

Evidence 8: The proposal for the new ACSUG Statutes

Evidence 37: Code of Ethics

Evidence 44: Decree 270/2003 of 22 May regulating the ACSUG



Evidence 45: Quality and Environmental Policy (website link)

Evidence 46: Quality and Environmental Goals

Evidence 47: Map of management system processes (website link)

5.2.6. Standard 3.6. Independence

Standard:

Agencies should be independent to the extent that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders involved.

Guidelines:

An agency will need to demonstrate its independence by means of measures such as:

- The guarantee through official documentation of its operative independence from higher education institutions and governments (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative proceedings).
- The definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the designation and nomination of external experts and the determination of the results of its quality assurance procedures are carried out autonomously and with independence from governments, higher education institutions and bodies of political influence.
- Although the parties involved in the higher education, in particular the students, are consulted during the development of the quality assurance procedures, the final results of the quality assurance procedures continue to be the responsibility of the agency.

Compliance with the standard

The public authorities of the Autonomous Community of Galicia have recognised the independence of ACSUG since the very moment of its creation. Thus the second clause in the co-operation agreement of 30 January 2001 between the Galician Regional Government and the three Galician universities, in which the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System consortium was created, set out that "*the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System Consortium is conceived with the intention of serving society in the capacity and with the independence necessary to exercise its functions with maximum precision and with full respect for university autonomy.*"

Likewise in section 1 of article 2, Decree 270/2003 of 22 May regulating ACSUG, recognises that "The Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System will undertake its functions independently, objectively, transparently and efficiently and is entirely subject to the rule of Law."

In any event, even though the formal recognition of independence was already guaranteed, on 14 July 2008, the Board of Directors adopted the agreement approving the amendments

to the Agency's statutes with the primary aim of reinforcing and guaranteeing this independence functionally and procedurally-speaking too. To this end, the organisational structure was altered to distinguish the governing bodies from the assessment and consultative bodies. In this way, the representation of the universities and of the Galician regional government is guaranteed on the Board of Directors; this is an enforceable situation in line with the provisions both in autonomous and state legislation. But, in addition, an assessment body and another advisory body have been set up with full capacity and independence in assessment matters.

Thus then, the Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA) was set up as the highest body, in assessment matters, and has maximum and final responsibility for decisions reached concerning reports, assessment, accreditation and certification.

Consistent with this, the members of the CGIACA are not appointed by, nor do they act in representation of any institution; rather, they act in a personal capacity and completely independently, taking responsibility individually for their decisions (section 4 of article 23 of the Statutes). These members are chosen from among persons of renowned prestige within the academic and scientific world, and so an appointment procedure is established based on the objective criteria of competency, experience, national and international recognition, etc., to ensure the independence and capability of its members.

Likewise, it has been established by statute that the CGIACA itself is responsible for approving its operating regulations, as well as its assessment procedures, protocols and methods. It will also be in charge of determining the composition, appointment procedure and functions of the Panels of Expert Assessors, taking part in the assessment procedures, within the limits of the provisions of law.

In addition, an Advisory Council is set up, comprising between six and ten members who will be appointed by the Board of Directors, from persons of acknowledged prestige in scientific, academic and business fields, either nationally or internationally, with no connection with the Galician University System, and guaranteeing the presence of business representatives and Galician university students; the role of this body will primarily be to report on, analyse and propose improvements to the different procedures and activities of ACSUG and to analyse the assessment methodologies and strategies that may be applicable to these improvements.

This differentiation between government bodies and advisory and assessment bodies is included in Law 6/2013 of the Galician Parliament, of 13 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG), which, in article 70, establishes that:

"The governing and management bodies of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System are the presidency, the Director and the governing council, on which the SUG Universities will be represented. A balanced presence of men and women will be sought for the composition of this governing body.

The Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation, as the highest quality assessment body for the Galician universities, and the Advisory Council, as the advisory body, will carry out

the functions assigned to them as set out in the statutes of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System and any other applicable regulations”.

As indicated above (in point 3.2 Official Status), temporary provision number eight of the above-mentioned LSUG, states that within one year of the coming into force of that law, ACSUG will proceed to modify its statutes to come into line with what is laid out under the law, as well as any other legislation which may be applicable to it. As a consequence, ACSUG has already started the procedure to modify its statutes. At the meeting of the ACSUG Board of Directors on 20 December 2013, a first draft of the new statutes was put to discussion.

In this statutory reform the recommendations made by the ENQA Assessment Board have been taken into account, and a series of modifications, among others, have been introduced into the composition both of the CGIACA and of the Advisory Council.

Thus then, in the CGIACA there is modification to the wording of the article corresponding to the composition of the body, which will be composed basically of members from the national and international academic and scientific community, but the presence of a person from the professional or business sphere will be guaranteed, along with that of a university student.

Likewise there is modification to the composition of the Advisory Council, and the Director of the Agency will no longer be its president.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 1: Law 6/2013 of 12 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG)

Evidence 7: ACSUG Statutes of 10 December 2008

Evidence 8: The proposal for the new ACSUG Statutes

Evidence 21: Resolution of the Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA) of 9 November 2010, approving the evaluation protocol and report for the recruitment of teaching staff by universities forming part of the Galician University System (SUG)

Evidence 22: Resolution of the CGIACA of 2 November 2010, approving the evaluation protocol and report prior to the consolidation of associate lecturers in the universities forming part of the Galician University System (SUG)

Evidence 35: Resolution of 30 September 2009, regulating the management procedures for expert assessors approved by the Galician Commission for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA)

Evidence 44: Decree 270/2003 of 22 May regulating the ACSUG

Evidence 48: The second clause of the collaboration agreement of 30 January 2001 between the Galician Regional Government and the three Galician universities, by which the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System Consortium was created

Evidence 49: Resolution of 30 September 2009, of the Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA) approving the internal regulation of this committee

5.2.7. Standard 3.7. External quality assurance standards and processes used by the agencies

Standard:

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available.

Normally these procedures should include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the party undergoing the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment conducted by a group of experts to include, when appropriate, one or several students and on-site visits, to be decided at the discretion of the Agency;
- the publication of a report which includes the decisions reached, recommendations and other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up process for reviewing the actions carried out by the subject undergoing the quality assurance review in light of the recommendations included in the report.

Guidelines:

The agencies may develop and use other processes or procedures for specific purposes.

The agencies must pay careful attention at all times to the principles which have been declared, and ensure that both the requisites and the process are managed in a professional manner, and that their conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even when the decisions have been taken by groups of different persons.

Agencies adopting formal quality assessment decisions, or reaching conclusions with formal consequences, must have appeal procedures in place. The nature and form of these appeal procedures must be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.

The activities which ACSUG perform include a phase of self-assessment, an external assessment, publication of results, an appeal or claims procedure, and the follow-up of these activities.

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available.

In all the activities undertaken, both the processes and the standards and procedures used are previously defined and planned, sufficiently in advance for them to be properly developed.



ACSUG uses its webpage, as well as other tools for communication (electronic mail, postal mail, etc.), to communicate and make public all the aspects relating to the activities undertaken to the institutions and stakeholders, including the guides, documentation and IT tools as needed.

Normally these procedures should include:

- A self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the party undergoing the quality assurance process;

All assessment processes undertaken include a phase of self-assessment or self-diagnosis which is performed by the institution or subject under assessment.

This internal assessment will depend to a great extent on the nature and characteristics inherent to the assessment programme, as well as on the party or institution being subjected to the process, although the aim is similar in all cases: to carry out an analysis, self-diagnosis and internal reflection in line with the bases and principles of the procedure.

The result of the self-evaluation is a report or document, the structure of which will depend on the type of assessment and which will be the basis for the following stage of the process.

- An external assessment conducted by a group of experts to include, when appropriate, one or several students, and on-site visits, to be decided at the discretion of the Agency;

When the self-assessment has been carried out, the following phase to be undertaken in the process is the external assessment.

In order to conduct this external review a group of experts are appointed on the basis of previously established selection criteria. ACSUG operates a procedure for management and selection of assessors which sets out basic criteria they should meet in order to undertake their task effectively. These criteria are adapted to and are indicated in each assessment process.

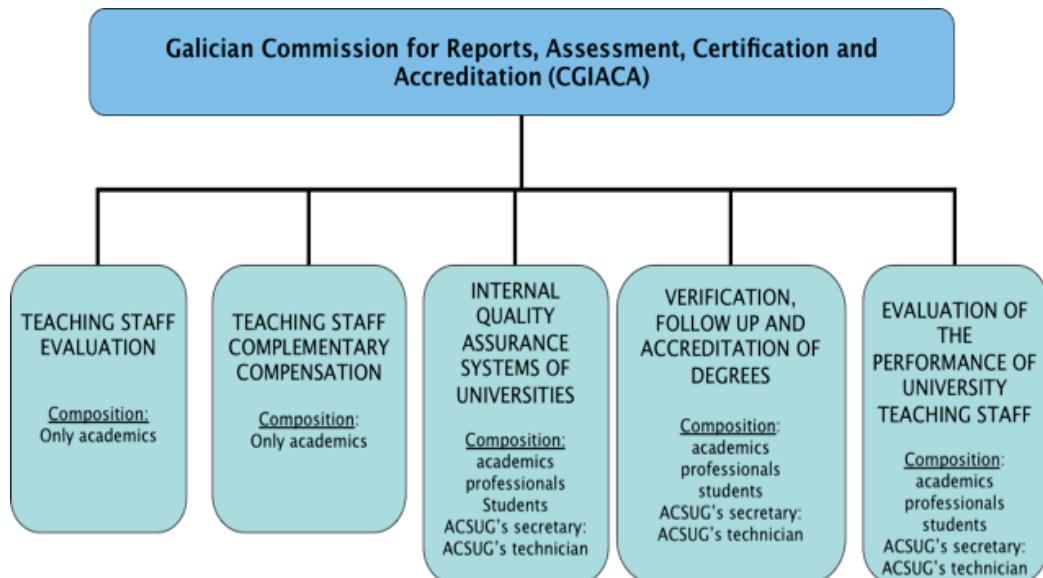


Figure 18: Evaluation committees of ACSUG

All assessors sign a non-disclosure agreement, two of the key principles demanded of which are objectivity, and an absence of conflict of interest during the process of the assessment. In order to safeguard these values, the majority of the experts are selected from outside the Galician University System.

While the experts are undertaking their task, ACSUG checks that they comply with these requirements and with those set out specifically for each activity.

Students are often present on ACSUG boards, with the exception of those boards intended for assessment activities of teaching staff and assessment of research.

The process of degree accreditation, as well as the FIDES-AUDIT programme and the international assessment of centres, include an external visit to the institution.

The result of the external assessment process is a report or resolution relating to the object under assessment.

- The publication of a report which includes the decisions reached, recommendations and other formal outcomes;

A final report of the decisions reached with regard to each procedure is then produced, based on the information generated during the self-assessment and external evaluation processes. The final assessment reports always need the approval of the ACSUG highest assessment body, the CGIACA.

The institutions and subjects assessed then have a time-scale, depending on the evaluation

process, in which they may lodge appeals or request clarification regarding the process.

When the review processes encompass a formal resolution or decision, or if the conclusions lead to a formal outcome, ACSUG has a petitions and appeals mechanism.

In the first instance an appeal may be lodged with ACSUG's decision-making body (CGIACA) by means of an administrative procedure (as per Law 30/1992 on Administrative Procedure). Also in existence is the option of the right to appeal before the Courts, in accordance with Law 29/1998 on Contentious-Administrative Jurisdiction.

- A follow-up process for reviewing the actions carried out by the subject undergoing the quality assurance review in light of the recommendations included in the report.

When the report includes recommendations with which the applicants must comply, there will be monitoring of the actions and changes carried out, in order to check their suitability. In the event that the actions undertaken do not comply with what has been set out, appropriate measures will be taken to correct them.

At an overall level, general monitoring of the processes carried out is performed, in order to obtain information which will be useful in improving the activities in future sessions.

EVIDENCES

Evidence 32: Guides, handbooks and reports on the evaluation programmes published on the ACSUG website

Evidence 33: Files on the operating processes of the ACSUG Management System

Evidence 35: Resolution of 30 September 2009, regulating the management procedures for expert assessors approved by the Galician Commission for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA)

Evidence 50: Law 30/1992 on Administrative Procedure

Evidence 51: Law 29/1998 on Contentious-Administrative Jurisdiction

5.2.8. Standard 3.8. Accountability procedures

Standard:

Agencies should have procedures in place for their own accountability.

Guidelines/Compliance with standard

- Publication and availability of the Agency's quality assurance policy on its website.

To enhance internal management, effective and efficient performance of the activities, suitable management of resources, and exercise influence on continuous improvement, ACSUG

has, since 2006, implemented an internal quality and environmental management system, certified by AENOR for ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and the EMAS Regulation.

It should be stressed that ACSUG is the only university quality assessment agency in Europe with an internal management system with certification for these regulations.

Furthermore, ACSUG has applied and implemented the laws on health and safety in the workplace and on data protection.

A quality assurance and environmental policy has been introduced, based on the guidelines discussed in the preceding paragraphs and on the mission and vision and the code of ethics; this policy provides the principles for action on which internal management is to be based. This policy has been public and available on the website and at the ACSUG offices since it was approved by the Board of Directors, and it is periodically reviewed.

The Board also approves, on an annual basis, in line with the management policy and system, the objectives for quality assurance and the environment which propose the undertaking of a specific series of actions to assure and improve the quality of its activities.

- The Agency's processes and results reflect its mission and its goals with regard to quality assurance.

On an annual basis, the Board of Directors approves the plan of activities to be developed. These activities must always take into account what is set out in its mission and vision along with any other relevant information such as the legal framework, statutes, etc.

Each year, ACSUG produces an overview of all the activities which have been undertaken during the course of the year. This annual report of activities is published and is also available on the website. In this way, anyone may verify the transparency of the activities undertaken and whether they comply with the goals and functions.

- The Agency has a mechanism for preventing conflicts of interest when the external experts perform their tasks, and puts this into practice.

The external experts and assessors form an essential part of the outcome of the activities undertaken. Therefore, ACSUG operates a management and selection procedure which sets out the basic criteria the assessors should fulfil in order to undertake their task properly.

All assessors sign a non-disclosure agreement, the key principles demanded of which are objectivity, confidentiality and absence of conflict of interest during the process of the assessment.



- The Agency has reliable mechanisms for assuring the quality of the activities and materials of sub-contracted parties on the occasions when some or all elements of the quality assurance procedure are outsourced.

As established in the internal management system, a procedure exists which sets out the criteria required of the suppliers who work with the Agency. Suppliers with whom the Agency works on a regular basis are included on a list of accepted suppliers and these are monitored to ensure that they continue to work properly.

If the work of a third party is particularly significant for the development of the activity, more stringent monitoring is put in place, including specific criteria as required.

The experts' work is evaluated on finalising each assessment, to check that they have carried out their tasks as initially specified. The assessment of the experts is kept on file and taken into account for future selection processes.

- The Agency has internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (e.g. provision for obtaining feedback from its own staff and from the advisory/governing board); an internal reflection mechanism (e.g. processes for responding to the recommendations regarding internal and external improvement); and an external feedback system (e.g. methods for obtaining feedback from the experts and institutions evaluated for future processes) in order to obtain information and adjust its development and improvement accordingly.

With the implementation of the internal management system, one of the objectives sought is an increase in the amount of information available, both internally and externally, which can be used to perform its activities more effectively and to ensure their ongoing improvement.

The internal feedback mechanisms are as follows:

- **Meetings of the Board of Directors:** at the Board of Directors meetings the participants give their opinion on the issues discussed and propose possible improvements and changes to be carried out, all of which is reflected in the minutes.
- **Meetings of other bodies (CGIACA and Advisory Council):** in the other consultative and assessment bodies, participation and exchange of information between participants is also encouraged.
- **Staff Meetings:** the staff holds meetings regularly, and these are very significant for the establishment of activity planning and of resource requirements.
- **Management system information:** performance indicators are established in the management system and these enable checking of the effective carrying out of the activities.

The data generated by the indicators, as well as all other documentation and files from the system, provides very important information. All this information is available on the internal network for all employees and is commented on in the staff meetings.

- **Internal management system audits:** since 2010 the annual audits of the quality management system are carried out entirely by ACSUG personnel.

As for external feedback mechanisms, the following are available:

- **Suggestion Box:** there is a suggestion box at the ACSUG offices and also on the webpage where users can ask questions, make complaints, suggestions or comments on the environment. All suggestions received are taken into account and are answered or resolved as quickly as possible.

- **Assessor Surveys:** the assessors and experts who work with ACSUG fill out a form for each process in which they take part, to express their level of satisfaction or opinion on the process, and they may propose improvements should they feel this necessary. All this information is analysed and taken into account.

- **Surveys amongst users and other stakeholders:** after each assessment session, the opinion of the session requesters is collected along with that of the teaching staff and of the representatives of the degrees under assessment. Feedback with the assessment process users is vital to check the efficiency of the activities being undertaken and to establish improvements and changes to these activities.

- **Talks, conferences and other working groups:** both the Director and the staff attend talks, conferences and work groups; these not only give information about activities but also collect information from other quality assurance agencies and other bodies.

- **Summary reports on activities:** analysis of the activities undertaken is carried out in order to adapt those activities constantly.

As stipulated in the continuous improvement procedure of the management system, several internal mechanisms for reflection exist which enable all the information generated, be this external or internal, to be put to use. The information is analysed and used to establish corrective, preventive and improvement measures, to create or amend management indicators, to prepare and establish the code of ethics, the quality assurance and environmental policy and annual objectives.

- A mandatory cyclical external review of activities at least once every five years.

This self-assessment report has been undertaken in accordance with the cyclical external assessment of the Agency on the part of ENQA, to be conducted every five years. Since ACSUG was first assessed in 2009, this is the first time that it has been re-evaluated. These assessment processes are not to be thought of as one-off, but rather as part of a continuous process of assessment and improvement.



In order to ensure influence on the revision of the activities, the following are carried out annually: an internal audit of the management system, a follow-up audit of that system by the certifying company, along with a financial audit. All these assessments make it possible to conduct ongoing checks on the suitability and efficiency of the services provided, and improve them and bring them up to date continuously.

Likewise, every three years, ACSUG must successfully complete an AENOR audit to certify its compliance with the reference standards of the internal management system.



Figure 19: ACSUG continuous improvement cycle

EVIDENCES

Evidence 34: Annual reports (website link)

Evidence 35: Resolution of 30 September 2009, regulating the management procedures for expert assessors approved by the Galician Commission for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA)

Evidence 36: Non-disclosure agreement model

Evidence 37: Code of Ethics

Evidence 39: Satisfaction survey results ([website link](#))

Evidence 45: Quality and Environmental Policy ([website link](#))

Evidence 46: Quality and Environmental Goals

Evidence 52: Staff meeting minutes

Evidence 53: Internal management system indicators



6. OVERALL EVALUATION

The self-assessment process, completed as the initial phase of the external re-assessment of ACSUG after 5 years as a full member of ENQA, has been an extremely useful tool for verifying the changes we have introduced since 2009. It has also allowed us to undertake an agency-wide analysis of the current situation at ACSUG.

Below is a general overview of some of the positive conclusions and some of the opportunities for improvement detected during the self-assessment process.

POSITIVE CONCLUSIONS

- Furthering and expansion of our national and international collaboration activities since 2009. Some of the major actions undertaken in this respect include becoming members of EQAR and ECA, participation in the Tempus CANQA Project, and taking part in many studies, working groups, conferences, etc.
- Significant increase in quality assurance activities since 2009, encompassing all the SUG stakeholders.
- The introduction of pilot schemes for new activities (for example the monitoring and accreditation of qualifications, in the FIDES-AUDIT Programme) to test the suitability of the working methods and tools and to suggest improvements to the subsequent evaluation processes.
- Improvement to ACSUG's internal and external feedback tools, which has led to more frequent exchanges of information about the programmes and to improvements in the procedures.
- Backing of and trust in the work carried out by the agency from both the Regional Government and the SUG universities. As proof of this:
 - The three universities participated in voluntary programmes set up by ACSUG to enhance quality, such as the FIDES-AUDIT and the DOCENTIA Programmes, and as demonstrated by the commitment of the institutions to improve quality.
 - The assigning to ACSUG of the evaluation tasks authority over which lies with the Education Department of the Regional Government: support programme to the Post-Doctorate period, assistance for the consolidation of research units and projects by emerging researchers, etc.
 - Agreement between the Regional Government and the three universities to include a specific budget item for ACSUG in the SUG 2011-2015 Funding Plan, which has not been cut even though SUG university budgets are falling due to the current economic situation.
- The introduction of several management systems and guidelines at ACSUG: quality, environment, data protection and the prevention of work place risks. All these have led to a more efficient and effective management of our activities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The design of a strategic plan for ACSUG, covering its mission, vision and values, as well as its work and its goals, and areas for improvement in the medium to long term.
- Improvements to making information available about the agency's activities through its website; for example by publishing the annual schedule of activities approved by the Board of Directors.
- Participation of a greater number of employees in international activities. To achieve this more English language training is needed amongst ACSUG staff.
- Participation and presence of students on the ACSUG bodies and committees, something that has gradually increased over recent years. Their participation on assessment panels has been very satisfactory. Nevertheless, ACSUG also intends to involve them in the decision making processes, not only to guarantee their presence on the governing, assessment and advisory bodies, but also to encourage their more active participation in them.
- Finalise the changes to the composition of the CGIAGA and the Advisory Council, with the introduction of the new ACSUG statutes. With regards to the CGIAGA, the presence of students and employers will be guaranteed and the participation of international academic representatives is planned. The ACSUG Director shall no longer be the secretary of this body. The Director will also no longer be the chair of the Advisory Council.
- Systematic incorporation of international experts in ACSUG's evaluation processes.

7. LIST OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

EVIDENCE NUMBER	EVIDENCE	SECTIONS OF THE REPORT IN WHICH IT APPEARS
1	Law 6/2013 of 12 June, on the Galician University System (LSUG)	2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.6
2	Royal Decree 1393/2007 of 29 October, laying down the regulation of officially recognised university education, amended by Royal Decree 861/2010	2.1, 3.3.1
3	Royal Decree 99/2011 of 28 January, which regulates officially-recognised doctorate teaching	2.1, 3.3.1
4	Spanish Constitution of 1978 (art 149.1.15 ^a and art 149.1.30 ^b)	2.2
5	Autonomous Community Statutes (art. 31 of Organic Law 1/1981 of 6 April)	2.2
6	Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December, on Universities, amended by Organic Law 4/2007 of 12 April	2.2, 3.1, 3.3.2, 5.2.2, 5.2.5
7	ACSUG Statutes of 10 December 2008	3.1, 3.2, 5.2.6
8	The proposal for the new ACSUG Statutes	3.2, 5.2.2, 5.2.5, 5.2.6
9	European Higher Education Area legislation (Book)	3.3.1
10	Support guide for evaluation prior to the verification of officially recognised qualifications (Graduate degree and Master's)	3.3.1, 5.1.1
11	Guide for the evaluation prior to the verification of doctorate programmes	3.3.1, 5.1.1
12	Procedure for requesting Modifications to verified Graduate degrees and Master's qualifications	3.3.1, 5.1.1
13	Guide for monitoring officially recognised graduate and master's degrees	3.3.1, 5.1.1
14	Report on the monitoring processes of officially recognised graduate and master's degrees (2011, 2012 and 2013 processes)	3.3.1, 5.1.1
15	Evaluation guide for the renewal of the accreditation of officially recognised graduate and master's degrees	3.3.1, 5.1.1
16	Guide to the Assessment of the design of Internal Quality Assurance Systems for university education	3.3.1, 5.1.1

EVIDENCE NUMBER	EVIDENCE	SECTIONS OF THE REPORT IN WHICH IT APPEARS
17	Guide for the certification of the implementation of Quality Assurance Systems	3.3.1, 5.1.1
18	Autonomous Community Decree 55/2004 of 4 March establishing additional bonus payments linked to individual teaching and research merits or to the administration merits of university teaching staff	3.3.2
19	Galician Parliament Law 3/2002 of 29 April, on tax and administrative systems measures	3.3.2
20	Autonomous Community Decree 266/2002 of 6 September on recruitment of university teaching staff	3.3.2
21	Resolution of the Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA) of 9 November 2010, approving the evaluation protocol and report for the recruitment of teaching staff by universities forming part of the Galician University System (SUG)	3.3.2, 5.2.6
22	Resolution of the CGIACA of 2 November 2010, approving the evaluation protocol and report prior to the consolidation of associate lecturers in the universities forming part of the Galician University System (SUG)	3.3.3, 5.2.6
23	Order of 16 October 2006, regulating the evaluation protocol approved by the CGIACA, regarding the criteria and procedures to apply for the appraisal and assignment of the bonuses in curricular excellence in teaching and research and in management posts	3.3.2
24	Guide for evaluation of the DOCENTIA designs	3.3.2
25	Guide for evaluation of the implementation of the DOCENTIA designs	3.3.2
26	Certification process for the DOCENTIA models	3.3.2
27	List of agreements	3.3.1, 3.3.3, 3.3.5
28	Publications on labour market integration	3.3.3
29	Galician Research, Innovation and Growth Plan 2011-2015 (I2C Plan)	3.3.4
30	Link on the ACSUG website to its international activities	3.3.5

EVIDENCE NUMBER	EVIDENCE	SECTIONS OF THE REPORT IN WHICH IT APPEARS
31	Link on the ACSUG website to its workshops	3.3.5, 5.1.2, 5.1.4, 5.1.8
32	Guides, handbooks and reports on the evaluation programmes published on the ACSUG website	5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.4, 5.1.5, 5.1.6, 5.1.7, 5.1.8, 5.2.7
33	Files on the operating processes of the ACSUG Management System	5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.7
34	Annual reports (website link)	5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.4, 5.1.7, 5.1.8, 5.2.8
35	Resolution of 30 September 2009, regulating the management procedures for expert assessors approved by the Galician Commission for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA)	5.1.3, 5.1.4, 5.7, 5.8, 5.2.6
36	Non-disclosure agreement model	5.1.3, 5.1.4, 5.2.8
37	Code of Ethics.	5.1.3, 5.1.4, 5.1.5, 5.2.5, 5.2.8
38	Database of assessors (website link)	5.1.3, 5.1.4
39	Satisfaction survey results (website link)	5.1.5, 5.2.8
40	Surveys and publications produced (website link)	5.1.7, 5.1.8
41	Staff members	5.2.4
42	The Galician University System 2011-2015 Funding Plan	5.2.4
43	Inventory of assets	5.2.4
44	Decree 270/2003 of 22 May regulating the ACSUG	5.2.5, 5.2.6
45	Quality and Environmental Policy (website link)	5.2.5, 5.2.8
46	Quality and Environmental Goals	5.2.5, 5.2.8
47	Map of management system processes (website link)	5.2.5

EVIDENCE NUMBER	EVIDENCE	SECTIONS OF THE REPORT IN WHICH IT APPEARS
48	The second clause of the collaboration agreement of 30 January 2001 between the Galician Regional Government and the three Galician universities, by which the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System Consortium was created	5.2.6
49	Resolution of 30 September 2009, of the Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation (CGIACA) approving the internal regulation of this committee	5.2.6
50	Law 30/1992 on Administrative Procedure	5.2.7
51	Law 29/1998 on Contentious-Administrative Jurisdiction	5.2.7
52	Staff meeting minutes	5.2.8
53	Internal management system indicators	5.2.8



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9. ACRONYMS

ACSUG: Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System

AENOR: Spanish Association for Standardisation and Certification

ANECA: National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation

AQU Catalunya: Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency

ASS: Administrative and Services Staff

CANQA: Central Asian Quality Assurance and Accreditation Network

CGIACA: Galician Committee for Reports, Assessment, Certification and Accreditation

DOG: Official Journal of Galicia

EHEA: European Higher Education Area

ENQA: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

EQAR: European Quality Assurance Register

ESG: European Standards and Guidelines

I2C Plan: Galician Research, Innovation and Growth Plan, 2011-2015

LOU: Spanish Law 6/2011 of 21 December, on Universities

LSUG: Law 6/2013 of 13 June, on the Galician University System

REACU: Spanish Network of University Quality Assurance Agencies

RUCT: Registry of Universities, Centres and Qualifications

SGC: Quality Assurance Systems

SUE: Spanish University System

SUG: Galician University System

TRS: Teaching and Research Staff

UNIBASQ: Basque University System Quality Agency

UANCV: Néstor Cáceres Velásquez Andina University

UDC: University of A Coruña

UNICA: San Luis Gonzaga de ICA National University

USC: University of Santiago de Compostela

USMP: University of San Martín de Porres

UVI: University of Vigo



ACSUG

AXENCIA para a CALIDADE do
SISTEMA UNIVERSITARIO de
GALICIA

Rúa Lamas de Abade s/n, CIFP Compostela 5^a planta
15702 Santiago de Compostela
Tfno: 981 534 173 | Fax: 981 534 174
e-mail: acsug@acsug.es | www.acsug.es