



AXENCIA PARA A CALIDADE DO
SISTEMA UNIVERSITÁRIO DE GALICIA (ACSUG)

CODE OF ETHICS OF THE AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE GALICIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM



Approved by the Board of Directors of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System (ACSUG) held in Santiago de Compostela on July 14, 2008

Code of ethics of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System
Document Ref^a: 140708

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The ACSUG has implanted a Quality Management System, certified in accordance with the ISO-9001:2000, since 20/03/2006 and certification number: EC-2346/06. The scope is the following:

- Support for the certification of administrative units in the Galician University System.
- Processing for regional complementary compensation and evaluation and reporting of teaching staff.
- Evaluation of qualifications, programmes and services in the Galician University System.

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Presentation

The Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System (Axencia para a Calidade do Sistema Universitario de Galicia, ACSUG) was created in 2001. Its primary mission is to contribute to improving the quality of the University System of Galicia, with a clear trend towards service to society and the entire university community in particular.

As a quality agency, the ACSUG always aims to conduct its activities with the highest levels of quality and transparency in its working methods, internal organisation and the procedures used. To carry out its duty as a link between Galician universities, other institutions and social agents efficiently, it is essential that the ACSUG enjoy credibility and recognition in all of its actions.

Therefore, it decided to standardise and shape into a code of ethics the principles and means of action that were already in place, but not established formally. The design and establishment of the code of ethics took into account the Nolan Report¹, which cites a series of basic principles applied generally in all public services:

- Selflessness.
- Integrity
- Objectivity.
- Accountability.
- Openness
- Honesty.
- Leadership.

This code reinforces the commitment to continuous improvement, transparency, excellence in conduct and means of action, as well as to conducting all activities efficiently and effectively. It was drawn up by personnel from the ACSUG, who take on all principles contained in the code as their own.

Julio Ernesto Abalde Alonso
ACSUG Director

¹ Nolan Report (1995). *Spending Public Money: Governance and Audit Issues (Cm 3179)*. March 1996. Code of Best Practice for QAA Board Members. Great Britain.

Mission and vision

Mission

The fundamental mission of the Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System (ACSUG) is to contribute to improving the quality of the Galician University System (SUG). To do so, it takes actions in the area of drafting reports, evaluation, certification and accreditation for the activities conducted by Galician universities, especially related to teaching, research, knowledge transfer and management.

The ACSUG provides constant support to gathering and channelling information among the Galician universities, other institutions and social agents, contributing to help the SUG remain up-to-date and in line with ever-changing social needs at all times.

Vision

The ACSUG aims to be a point of reference in guaranteeing the quality of the SUG Higher Education institutions, recognised in Galicia, Spain and internationally for its independence, transparency and credibility.

Article 1. Purpose

The purpose of the ACSUG code of ethics is to establish a set of action standards that enable it to conduct its activities in accordance with the criteria of trust and social responsibility, as well as to create common shared values that are integrated into the agency's working methods.

Article 2. Scope of application, commitment and legality

The code of ethics applies in all ACSUG relations with the Galician university community, as well as with other institutions or interest groups with which it comes into contact.

It includes the ACSUG Governing Bodies and Management, in particular the agency director; the Advisory and Evaluation Entities; the staff in each of the areas; as well as all collaborators and evaluators who carry out services entrusted by the ACSUG. All of them confirm their commitment to the code of ethics to ensure that the ACSUG reaches the highest levels of excellence in its conduct and actions.

The ACSUG will conduct its activities within the guidelines of the Spanish Constitution, the Statute of the Region of Galicia and all applicable laws, based on their duties and responsibilities.

Article 3. Quality, innovation and excellence

The ACSUG is committed to excellence and innovation in conducting its activities as an important and differentiating aspect. Therefore, it promotes an attitude of constant improvement in the services provided, including the concepts of a culture of excellence and innovation in its processes.

In the ACSUG, all necessary actions and changes are made, seeking external approval and certification as regards standards, models and common internationally recognised rules in order to improve constantly its results and trust in its area of action, society and the university community.

Article 4. Ethics criteria and the search for results

Management is obliged to instil in the organisation an ethical and socially responsible character as the basis for optimising internal efficiency. Management will promote a positive, motivating working climate, so that all employees perform their jobs and tasks seeking operational excellence and constantly increasing the value provided by the ACSUG to society and to the SUG.

Article 5. Use of human and material resources

The ACSUG shall seek effectiveness and excellence in all its activities, managing both human and material resources under the criteria of austerity and efficiency.

The origin of these resources, as well as their use, shall be subject to strict standards of transparency. The resources must be used responsibly and impartially, reinforcing the independence of the ACSUG in its actions.

Article 6. Publication of the code of ethics

The ACSUG shall ensure that the code of ethics is published and distributed, available to all interested parties and to the general public.

Article 7. Approval, evaluation and review of the code of ethics

The code of ethics is approved by the ACSUG Executive Board and its proper application and validity shall be reviewed periodically by this body, coinciding with the Annual Review of the Management System implemented at the ACSUG, which is done during the last meeting of the year.

In addition to the above, the suitability and application of the code of ethics shall be reviewed in the daily work of all ACSUG bodies and by the staff, notifying the director of any aspect related to it.

Any incidents or controversies that arise regarding compliance with the standards or codes of ethics and best practices in the procedures and actions performed shall be resolved by the ACSUG Advisory Board.

Article 8. Respect and collaboration

The ACSUG works at all times on the basis of full respect and the search for collaboration and smooth communication with the Galician universities and with other administrations and quality agencies, whether regional, national or international. The sharing of best practices and evaluation, accreditation, certification and analysis tools is considered essential to continuous improvement and the effective and efficient performance of ACSUG activities.

Article 9. User guidance

The ACSUG focuses its attention and strategy on satisfying the needs and expectations of the users. Society, especially Galician society, demands guarantees related to the quality of Higher Education, including teaching, research, knowledge transfer and management. Therefore, the ACSUG's activities and services focus on satisfying that demand.

Article 10. Professionalism

ACSUG personnel and all those who provide services to the same are committed to doing their jobs with a view to serving public interests, always placing the public interests before individual benefits in everything they do.

Article 11. Transparency

The ACSUG shall provide all necessary information on its evaluation processes, procedures, criteria, forms and tools used in the evaluations and activities in advance and clearly, without hiding any information to which the users of the ACSUG services have a right.

The ACSUG will draw up an Activities Report each year in which it clearly indicates the activities carried out, agreements and alliances established and information on human, material and economic resources. This report is made public and available to society in general and to the university community in particular.

Article 12. Independence

The ACSUG is a public entity, with full legal identity, independent of that of its members, with full legal capacity to fulfil its objectives.

Therefore, the ACSUG acts independently and freely in fulfilling its obligations with the firm purpose of favouring fulfilment of its Mission, its Vision and the professionalism and credibility of its actions. No external pressure, influence or interventions shall be allowed to influence the integrity of the criteria and principles of its actions.

Article 13. Data protection and confidentiality

The ACSUG will establish all measures necessary to manage adequately all information and personal data that it maintains in accordance with the applicable legislation related to data protection, with special emphasis on establishing effective security mechanisms that ensure the confidentiality of the data.

All individuals who access confidential information in the performance of their job for the ACSUG sign a statement of confidentiality, impartiality and absence of conflicts of interest.

Article 14. Impartiality and neutrality

All individuals who provide ACSUG services must be neutral and impartial, fulfilling the same standards of ethics included in this code and refraining from participating in any activity in the event of conflicts of interest.

Article 15. Accuracy

All entities comprising the ACSUG, their personnel, collaborators and evaluators shall conduct their activities based solely on precision and technical accuracy, without discriminating based on scientifically irrelevant factors such as age, gender, language, ethnicity or religion, and without considering prior judgements of value.

Article 16. Teamwork and internal communication

In addition to establishing lines of communication with external entities and interest groups, the ACSUG considers internal communication to be vital to achieving the goals established in conducting its activities.

Therefore, all necessary meetings and internal information exchange activities will be conducted to encourage teamwork, sharing experiences and ideas and proposing improvements and changes.

Article 17. Environmental responsibility

The ACSUG, aware of the importance of conducting its activities with respect for its surroundings, is committed to managing the Environment responsibly. To do so, it has established the following general principles:

- Conducting the activities to minimise the negative environmental impacts associated with them.
- Seeking energy efficiency, reducing the consumption of materials and other resources and properly managing all waste generated.
- Complying with the principle of preventing pollution, incorporating environmental criteria in all ACSUG activities.

Article 18. Social responsibility

The ACSUG, within the framework of its clear commitment to the user, considers the impact on society of the services it provides. In that regard, it identifies the interested parties and establishes communication mechanisms with them to collect information on the activities conducted. All information gathered has a decisive value as regards continuous improvement of the activities and services provided, adapting them to the ever-changing social situation.



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