

**Report of the Panel appointed to undertake a review of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Research of Andalusia (AGAE) for the purposes of full membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)**

**Draft Report v.2  
16.12.2008**

## Overview

### Introduction

1 The regulations of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) require all member agencies to undergo an external review at least once every five years. External reviews are expected to include consideration of how far agencies meet the criteria for full membership of ENQA.

These criteria are identical to the European Standards and Guidelines in Quality Assurance (ESG) in the European Higher Education Area, adopted by Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Bergen in 2005. Conformity with the ESG will also in due course constitute the principal criterion for inclusion on a Register of Quality Assurance Agencies, the establishment of which was agreed at the London ministerial summit held in May 2007.

Membership of both the Association and the Register requires a satisfactory external review; one review is expected to be sufficient to cover both purposes. Given that there is currently no national regulation for external review of quality assurance agencies for higher education in Spain, a request was made by AGAE for the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) to be responsible for the external evaluation of the Agency.

ENQA has identified for its own purposes two types of nationally co-ordinated external review. These are:

- a) a review the sole purpose of which is to fulfil the periodic external review requirement of ENQA membership; and
- b) a review which has a number of purposes, one of which is to fulfil the periodic external review requirement of ENQA membership.

### Terms of Reference for the Review

2 AGAE is the main instrument for the oversight of quality assurance in Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in Andalusia, an autonomous region in Spain, which AGAE carries out through assessment activities, process certification and the accreditation of learning and research processes.

In addition to investigating to what extent AGAE meets the criteria for full membership of ENQA, the review also aims to provide feedback on AGAE's broader role and distinctive programmes in the context of the Andalusian Knowledge System, with particular reference to its teaching staff assessment programmes and its research grants evaluation procedures. This review has therefore been conducted as a Type 'B' review with the following purposes:

- an external assessment to establish the extent to which AGAE complies with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), in order for it to fulfil the periodic external review requirement for membership of ENQA, culminating in a report to the ENQA Board

- an overview of the effectiveness of both AGAE's teaching staff assessment programmes and research grants evaluation procedures, for the information and guidance of the AGAE and the AGAE Board

### **Scope of the review**

3 In fulfilling these purposes the review team was asked to consider the following core tasks and operations of the AGAE:

#### *i) Evaluation of Institutional Quality*

- Evaluation of quality assurance in higher education institutions. The assessment of departments, centres, degrees and services.
- Assessment of proposals for the new Postgraduate Programmes (M.Sc. and Ph.D.) of Andalusian public Universities

#### *ii) Assessment of university teaching staff*

- Teaching staff accreditation: assessment of the teaching and research activities of temporary staff for report to the Universities in the granting of confirmation of tenure
- Evaluations for granting of Emeritus Professor status
- As a partner in the 'Docentia' programme (a collaborative programme between AGAE and the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA) for the development of a methodology for teaching staff evaluation)
- Other teaching staff assessment and evaluation exercises, such as the 'Good teaching performance incentives' scheme, linked to the granting of additional salary rewards to individual university staff.

#### *iii) Evaluation of Research Programmes, groups and initiatives*

- Research Projects Assessment and Evaluation.
- Research Activity Evaluation of Groups under the Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Scheme (PAIDI)
- Other Research Activities Evaluation, such as that linked to the granting of Research Incentive payments.

### **Membership of the Panel**

4 The members of the Panel were:

Séamus Puirseil, lately Chief Executive of the Higher Education & Training Awards Council for Ireland (Chairman)

Professor Domingo Do Campo, Department of Signal Theory and Communications, University of Vigo, (and formerly Rector of the University of Vigo), Spain

Thierry Malan, lately General Inspector for Administration of National Education and Research, Ministry of Education and Research, France

Rossella Iraci Capuccinello, doctoral postgraduate student, Lancaster University, UK, and lately member of the Executive Committee of the European Students Association.

Paul Mitchell, (Secretary to the Panel), independent HE consultant, UK.

## **Approach**

5 The review was conducted through a transparent process managed independently of the AGAE. The Panel sought to conduct the Review in a professional and courteous way, but in a manner which was both constructively searching and challenging. The review process as a whole proceeded smoothly and responsively. During the site visits, the Panel was met throughout with unfailing courtesy and by a willingness at all levels to engage in discussion and exploration of key issues.

## **Methodology**

6 In fulfilling the purposes of the review the Panel has:

- considered the broader context within which AGAE operates
- considered a self-evaluation document prepared by AGAE
- sought additional documentation relevant to the Panel's lines of enquiry, both before and during the site visit
- during a three-day site visit to AGAE's offices in Cordoba (19-21 November 2008) (Appendix 1), met with a range of stakeholders (determined by the Panel) representative of all AGAE's operations, including:
  - the Secretary General of the Andalusian Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise
  - AGAE Board members
  - Director of AGAE, senior advisers and all AGAE professional staff
  - Panel members/reviewers with experience of operating AGAE processes at institutional level
  - senior staff and students from HEIs with independent experience of AGAE quality assurance and assessment processes
  - expert adviser on the local labour market
  - meetings with co-ordinators of AGAE's Scientific Committees and members of AGAE's Research, Development and Innovation Committee and with staff who have experienced research evaluation
  - meetings with AGAE staff responsible for teaching staff assessment, teaching incentives and other teaching assessment programmes

## **Self-evaluation document**

7 The self-evaluation document submitted by AGAE comprised an account of the following principal areas:

- Approach to the Review
  - Sources of Information
  - Analysis of Stakeholder Submissions
- Background and current state of Higher Education and Research and Quality Assurance in Andalusia
  - The Andalusian University System: structure and figures
  - The Andalusian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Research (AGAE)

- AGAE Functions and European Standards and Guidelines
  - ESG Part 2: Assessment against European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education
  - ESG Part 3: Assessment against European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies
- Use of External Quality Assurance Procedures for Higher Education
  - Procedures used by AGAE (amplified in Annexes comprising key procedural documents)

The Panel considered the self-evaluation to be analytical and reflective. In particular it welcomed AGAE's own analysis, both in the document and in discussion, of its strengths and weaknesses and identification of those areas where enhancements to its operations could be made, with which the Panel concur.

A summary of the supporting documentation made available to the Panel is summarised at Appendix 2.

## The Local Context

8 The University system of the Autonomous Region of Andalusia consists of ten public universities. The universities comprise: University of Almeria (UAL), University of Cadiz (UCA), University of Cordoba (UCO), University of Granada (UGR), University of Huelva (UHU), University of Jaen (UJA), University of Malaga (UMA), University of Seville (USE), University of Pablo de Olavide (UPO) and the International University of Andalusia. In the academic year 2007-2008, public universities in Andalusia offered 123 different degree programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The structure of these degree programmes, as in the rest of Spain and in other parts of the EU, is currently undergoing substantial change to conform to the Bologna recommendations for a three-cycle framework in accordance with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) qualifications framework. These universities had a total enrolment of 223,511 students in the academic year 2007-08, of whom 123,965 were female and 99,546 were male. By nationality, Andalusian universities registered a total of 4,674 international students in 2007-08, mostly located at the Universities of Granada and Malaga. Total full time equivalent teaching staff and researchers numbered 17,087, including 9,126 tenured professors and 7,961 tenured and non-tenured lecturers. In addition, there are 8,480 administrative and support staff.

9 The role played by the Andalusian University system is essential for the economic and social development of the region. Universities in Andalusia are responsible for guarantying quality in education, promoting research and innovation, facilitating technology transfer, and encouraging entrepreneurship. They are also accountable for educating according to democratic values, and promoting international cooperation and cultural development. It must be emphasised that Andalusian universities are ultimately responsible for ensuring the effective convergence of the university system with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

10 Formal responsibility for the University System in Andalusia was transferred from the national Government to the autonomous region of Andalusia in 1986. Since then, the Autonomous Government of Andalusia has had responsibility for oversight of the Andalusian University System within the 1983 National Law. The *Innovation and Modernisation Scheme for Andalusia* (PIMA), put in place in 2005, gave the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise a duty to achieve a level of excellence in university activities of teaching, research and technology, and knowledge transfer so as to increase competitiveness within Europe. The Andalusian Board of Universities (CAU) was then established to serve as a consulting body to the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise on University issues. Regional government's decisions must be approved by the CAU. Equally, society at large is represented at university level through the Social Council (CS) which helps to support the growth of an open and committed university system.

11 A few years after responsibility for the University system was transferred from the National Government to the Autonomous Regional Government of Andalusia, efforts were initiated to develop a quality

assurance system for the Region. Such efforts led in 1998 to the establishment of a Consortium for Quality Assurance of the University System in Andalusia (UCUA). UCUA was created as a consortium between the Regional Ministry of Science and Education (later to become the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise) (CICE) and the Public Universities in Andalusia, with the mission to promote quality improvement in Andalusian Universities through its main instrument, the institutional assessment of quality. The Spanish Universities Act (2001), brought in significant changes to legislation in the regional Autonomous Communities with the introduction of mechanisms to promote academic excellence through a new quality system that emphasized features such as being objective, independent and transparent, and which provided the assurance of merit and capability in teaching staff selection and promotion, and quality improvement in all other areas of university activity. In 2003, a reform of the framework legislation for Spanish Universities led to legislative changes proposed by the Autonomous Regional Government that affected UCUA. The Andalusian University Act ((2003)), which was embedded into the basic framework defined by the national Spanish Universities Act, expanded on the jurisdiction of the government of Andalusia over higher education and research.

12 The new Andalusian Act created AGAE (Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Research of Andalusia) in 2005 and indicated that UCUA would be integrated in the new AGAE. The 2005 legislation designated AGAE as the main instrument for quality promotion and assurance, to be carried out through assessment, process certification and the accreditation of learning and research processes in the Andalusian Knowledge System and within the framework of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The new AGAE incorporated the legacy of the UCUA consortium, but had a different legal status, as an administrative autonomous agency of the Government of Andalusia, with full legal identity and capacity, and its own assets with which it carries out its functions. These were extended to cover institutional quality assessment and teaching staff and research evaluation.

13 The Andalusian Science and Knowledge Law of December 3rd, 2007 will bring further significant changes by incorporating the AGAE into an independent, public corporation under a different name of Andalusian Knowledge Agency (AKA). The new Agency will have two separate parts: one will maintain the same functions as those currently developed by AGAE, while the other will develop activities in the fields of promotion and funding of University activities, and of research projects. The new AKA is to be established sometime in 2009, and its operational principles are also based on independence, objectivity, transparency, efficiency and fairness.

14 The AGAE is headed by a Board of Directors (Consejo Rector) and an Executive Director. Its operations are carried out through three committees with delegated functions in the following areas: Higher Education (HEA); Research, Development and Innovation (RDIA); and Management. There is also an Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation Committee (comprising the Executive Director, individuals from the three specialist committees and a group of external advisors) could be described

as a Quality Assurance Committee for AGAE's own operations. The Board of Directors is the governing body of AGAE. It is made up of the Regional Minister of Innovation, Science and Enterprise (President), the Executive Director of AGAE (Vice-President), five members nominated independently by the Andalusian Board of Universities, three members from AGAE's organisational structure and the Secretary General. The Board's main functions are to establish the Agency's strategic goals and monitor their execution in line with the Andalusian University Act, to approve the programme of annual activities and to exercise financial oversight. The Director is the Agency's Executive Director and is responsible to the Board for the implementation of its strategies and policies and for the overall performance of the Agency. The Executive Director's main functions are to supervise the attainment of the Agency's goals, to represent AGAE externally at the corporate level and to liaise with Government and other stakeholders on the Agency's activities. The Executive Director is appointed by the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise from among 'individuals of recognised prestige' in University and research circles for a period of four years, on a renewable basis. There are currently fourteen full time professional staff working for AGAE, together with a wide range of contracted part-time expert reviewers and advisers.

15 The legislation envisages **assessment, accreditation and certification of quality** as the main quality mechanisms for assuring standards (see AGAE Statutes: Decree 1/2005, January 11th art. 6). The Agency has established two committees to exercise delegated powers in making decisions on individual applications for assessment, accreditation or certification. These two committees focus on the following two areas of responsibility:

**Higher Education Area (HEA)**

Evaluation of institutional quality and assessment of university teaching staff

**Research, Development and Innovation Area (RDIA)**

Evaluation of research programmes, groups and initiatives.

A common feature of all AGAE's major processes for quality assessment is the appointment of panels of experts (preferably from outside Andalusia) to advise AGAE within a strategic framework set by the Agency on whether the individual institutions, programmes or proposed research projects meet the relevant criteria for quality assurance. The number of applications has been very large and varied and are summarised in AGAE's annual reports, found in the evidence pack.

## **AGAE Compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area**

(The numbering system applied below to each standard of the ESG is that used in ENQA's 1995 report to ministers in Bergen)

### **2.4 Part 2: European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education**

#### **2.4.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures**

**Standard:**

External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

**Guidelines:**

The standards for internal quality assurance contained in Part 1 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. It is important that the institutions' own internal policies and procedures are carefully evaluated in the course of external procedures, to determine the extent to which the standards are being met.

If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.

#### **AGAE compliance**

16 AGAE's general approach to the review process is set out in its Strategic Plan 2008-2010 and more explicitly in the criteria set out in its Service Letter issued to institutions, which sets out the procedures and guidelines under which the work is carried out. The reference points used by AGAE are contained in the Service Letter, which itself is compatible with section 1 of the ESG. The procedures and guidelines for the work are thus in accordance with recognized good practice in terms of consistency, independent judgement, openness and clear communication. The institutions' self-evaluations of their own processes are a key element in this review process. Based on individual examples the Panel has explored, AGAE's processes are effective in testing and challenging institutions' internal quality assurance policies and their procedures for managing quality and standards.

#### **Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

#### **2.4.2 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 with a description of the procedures to be used.

##### **Guidelines:**

In order to ensure clarity of purpose and transparency of procedures, external quality assurance methods should be designed and developed through a process involving key stakeholders, including higher education institutions. The procedures that are finally agreed should be published and should contain explicit statements of the aims and objectives of the processes as well as a description of the procedures to be used.

As external quality assurance makes demands on the institutions involved, a preliminary impact assessment should be undertaken to ensure that the procedures to be adopted are appropriate and do not interfere more than necessary with the normal work of higher education institutions.

#### **AGAE compliance**

17 Evaluation of Institutional Quality is a key function of the AGAE; this includes both the assessment of university departments, centres, degrees, services and facilities and; since 2007, the assessment of proposals for new postgraduate programmes of Andalusian Public Universities within the EHEA. The AGAE's basic programme accreditation policy, criteria and processes regarding institutional quality are set out in the following public documents

- Plan for the Quality of Andalusian Universities
- Guidelines for the self-evaluation report for institutional assessment
- Instructions and guidelines for the external evaluation of the institutional assessment
- Decree 56/2005, January 21st on the Regulation of Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions; Decree 1509/2005, December 16th which modifies Decree 56/2005,
- Decree 1393/2007, October 29, 2007 on the Regulation of Degree and Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions
- Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Postgraduate Programme Implementation
- 'Dublin' descriptors

18 These guidelines are intended to assist stakeholders in establishing, maintaining and improving quality assurance procedures and simultaneously in meeting the requirements of the Agency in respect of quality assurance.

Institutional assessment is carried out based on recommendations by an external evaluation committee (EEC). This external committee reviews the documentation submitted by the stakeholders, visits the institution and make a written external report. The EEC must have a balanced composition where experts from the academic/ institution, scientific and professional/business fields are represented. Committee members are independent of the institution and they are selected from a database of

experts from Andalusian and non-Andalusian universities and businesses, and other nationally based quality assurance agencies. The external committee evaluation is completed in four to six weeks after receipt of the self-evaluation report. A stakeholder survey has confirmed general satisfaction with the process and in particular with the independence, objectivity, and transparency that have characterised the EEC selection and the writing up of the final report. External Committee members in general report themselves also satisfied or very satisfied with the process.

19 The Board of Directors ultimately approves the annual activities of AGAE and these are published on the Agency's website. The major processes included in AGAE's activities are developed through a process of research and consultation. Members from the three specialised committees participate actively in the development processes. The final level of approval is from the Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation Committee and the Board of Directors, which ratify the agreed external quality assurance processes.

The Panel has explored and confirmed that principal stakeholders and providers participate in this consultation process. For example, *ad hoc* groups were created to initially develop and/or revise manuals of guidelines and criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures for the different programmes in place. The composition of these groups includes members from the Quality Units of the different Andalusian Universities, as well as external experts recruited for this purpose. Similarly commissions were created to develop the methodology for assessing university services and to prepare the Guidelines for the establishment of the 'Ensuring Quality Systems' for degree programme provision. The increasing use made of 'stakeholder surveys' for each of AGAE's core processes reflects its determination to further enhance the participative consultation process.

**Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

### **2.4.3 Criteria for decisions**

**Standard:**

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

**Guidelines:**

Formal decisions made by quality assurance agencies have a significant impact on the institutions and programmes that are judged. In the interests of equity and reliability, decisions should be based on published criteria and interpreted in a consistent manner. Conclusions should be based on recorded evidence and agencies should have in place ways of moderating conclusions, if necessary.

### **AGAE compliance**

20 The criteria for decisions within AGAE's quality assurance processes are published prior to the implementation of the process. They are clearly and unambiguously expressed, explicit and consistent overall. AGAE has paid particular attention to the training of expert panels in programmes such as those related to institutional assessment, to support consistency of judgements.

Decisions for the different assessment programmes are taken by more than one person against transparent, publicly available criteria; this supports an evidence-based decision making process which is fair, coherent and transparent.

**Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

#### **2.4.4 Processes fit for purpose**

##### **Standard:**

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

##### **Guidelines:**

Quality assurance agencies within the EHEA undertake different external processes for different purposes and in different ways. It is of the first importance that agencies should operate procedures which are fit for their own defined and published purposes. Experience has shown, however, that there are some widely-used elements of external review processes which not only help to ensure their validity, reliability and usefulness, but also provide a basis for the European dimension to quality assurance.

Amongst these elements the following are particularly noteworthy:

- insistence that the experts undertaking the external quality assurance activity have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task
- the exercise of care in the selection of experts
- the provision of appropriate briefing or training for experts
- the use of international experts
- participation of students
- ensuring that the review procedures used
- recognition of the importance of institutional improvement are sufficient to provide adequate evidence to support the findings and conclusions reached
- the use of the self-evaluation/site visit/draft report/published report/follow-up model of review and enhancement policies as a fundamental element in the assurance of quality.

#### **AGAE compliance**

21 AGAE has developed a growing number of new processes since its creation in 2005 in response to a variety of responsibilities placed upon it. Some have been 'one-off' while others are recurrent. The Panel notes that AGAE uses different procedures for the various review processes that it undertakes. While each of the review types has a different emphasis, the Panel accepts that all have developed in the context of fitness for purpose.

The processes share the following common features

- panels of experts are carefully selected, paying particular attention to their qualifications and experience.
- appropriate training is routinely given to members of expert panels
- an evidence-based approach underpins the key processes, so as to support the conclusions reached
- institutional level evaluations by a group of independent experts give appropriate focus to the self-evaluation report
- as part of periodic evaluations the opportunity is taken to recommend ways in which improvements might be made to the management of standards and quality.

The Panel noted that AGAE plans to further embed its external assessment processes for university programs through a strengthening of the procedures for comprehensively debriefing panels on completion of their

work and through a strengthening of internal procedures for ensuring that final documents are written in consistent language

22 The Panel noted that there has been no tradition within Andalusia for the inclusion of students as reviewers, although it was pleased to note that this situation was likely to change with the setting up of a new Student Council for Andalusia. In its self evaluation, the Agency recognises the desirability of increasing student participation in external quality assurance processes in the universities; this is in line with the locally perceived need to enhance the active participation of students in all aspects of the governance of the university system in the Region. Similarly there has been no tradition for the inclusion of international experts as reviewers, although the principle of exclusively appointing reviewers from outside Andalusia for institutional assessment is well-established. The recruitment of reviewers from other autonomous regions of Spain can be seen as fulfilling the spirit of the guidelines. The Panel notes that the inclusion of both students and international experts in review activity is fully within the spirit of the European Standards and Guidelines and would urge AGAE to move towards implementation as soon as practicable.

**Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

#### **2.4.5 Reporting**

##### **Standard:**

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

##### **Guidelines:**

In order to ensure maximum benefit from external quality assurance processes, it is important that reports should meet the identified needs of the intended readership.

Reports are sometimes intended for different readership groups and this will require careful attention to structure, content, style and tone.

In general, reports should be structured to cover description, analysis (including relevant evidence), conclusions, commendations, and recommendations.

There should be sufficient preliminary explanation to enable a lay reader to understand the purposes of the review, its form, and the criteria used in making decisions. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations should be easily locatable by readers. Reports should be published in a readily accessible form and there should be opportunities for readers and users of the reports (both within the relevant institution and outside it) to comment on their usefulness.

#### **AGAE compliance**

23 The Agency is committed to publishing reports and seeks to present them in a clear and accessible language, following the European Standards and Guidelines. Evaluation reports are written to a consistent format, following the guidelines established for the different programmes, which guarantees consistency between them. Reports of institutional assessment programmes are published by the Agency on its website; providers can consult the results from the accreditation of university staff programme through the internet. Decisions relating to the programmes are published in aggregate in AGAE's annual report. AGAE seeks to facilitate easy and quick internet access to users and providers of its services, where there are no issues of individual confidentiality.

#### **Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

#### **2.4.6 Follow up-procedures**

**Standard:**

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

**Guidelines:**

Quality assurance is not principally about individual external scrutiny events: it should be about continuously trying to do a better job. External quality assurance does not end with the publication of the report and should include a structured follow-up procedure to ensure that recommendations are dealt with appropriately and any required action plans drawn up and implemented. This may involve further meetings with institutional or programme representatives. The objective is to ensure that areas identified for improvement are dealt with speedily and that further enhancement is encouraged.

#### **AGAE compliance**

24 Institutional assessment programmes include detailed information from the Panel involved about any improvements needed. AGAE's staff (officer in charge) monitors the follow-up measures working with the institution concerned. AGAE staff pay particular attention to tracking any remaining problems from previous assessments relating to the continuous improvement of the programme. There is close liaison between the panel experts and the AGAE staff in charge of each programme. The Panel has tracked examples of actions taken following judgements of and is fully confident that AGAE's' follow-up procedures are operating effectively. Regarding other specific AGAE programmes, applicants for the accreditation of university teaching staff programme can follow their individual decision process through the internet.

There is however some variation in AGAE's approach to the evaluation of improvement plans across the different strands of its range of activities and the Panel welcomes AGAE's intention to review its protocols to achieve greater commonality and sharing of methodology across cognate assessment functions. In September 2008, it is expected that the National Network of Agencies for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (REACU) will agree on an official document for institutional assessment follow-up. Similarly there is currently a Working Group of Officers from the different regional quality assurance agencies developing a follow-up consultation document on the Docentia programme. The outcomes will further consolidate systematic follow-up procedures to guarantee the transparency and effectiveness of the mechanisms for improvement.

**Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

#### **2.4.7 Periodic reviews**

**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 but a dynamic process. It should be continuous and not 'once in a lifetime'. It does not end with the first review or with the completion of the formal follow-up procedure. It has to be periodically renewed. Subsequent external reviews should take into account progress that has been made since the previous event. The process to be used in all external reviews should be clearly defined by the external quality assurance agency and its demands on institutions should not be greater than are necessary for the achievement of its objectives.

#### **AGAE compliance**

25 AGAE is responsible for a very wide range of QA procedures across a very broad range of institutional activity; many of these procedures have been introduced fairly recently and the future cycle for many of them has not yet been (and has not needed to be) fully articulated.

For example, post-graduate programmes evaluated in 2006 are subject to a cycle of accreditation within a fixed period and a timetable for this was presented to the Board of Directors meeting held in June, 2008. Similarly, research activity evaluation of the Andalusian research groups (i.e. researchers individually and PAIDI groups) has been subject to annual evaluation since 2007.

With a European move to greater institutional ownership of quality and standards, the frequency of external inspection becomes a less critical factor. However the Panel welcomes AGAE's intention both to articulate more clearly the frequency of its systematic periodic reviews and to explore and if possible rationalise the interrelationship between the procedures currently in place. This will place its operations on a more secure basis.

**Panel judgement:**

Substantially compliant

#### **2.4.8 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 collect a wealth of information about individual programmes and/or institutions and this provides material for structured analyses across whole higher education systems. Such analyses can provide very useful information about developments, trends, emerging good practice and areas of persistent difficulty or weakness and can become useful tools for policy development and quality enhancement. Agencies should consider including a research and development function within their activities, to help them extract maximum benefit from their work.

#### **AGAE compliance**

26 The evolution of AGAE since its creation in 2005 has been to move from a focus on just institutional assessment to also becoming the main instrument for quality promotion and enhancement of teaching, learning and research processes in the Andalusian Knowledge System. Also a stated strategic objective of the Agency is to become the primary source of information about the quality of the system and as such, to be able to support the decision making process. In doing so, the Agency plans to become a point of reference for the regional government, the Andalusian university and research system and society generally, including students and employers.

At present AGAE provides annual reports with aggregate information about its evaluation, certification and accreditation activities. It has also begun to provide a limited number of cross-sector reports on areas such as Library provision. AGAE proposes to expand its capacity to undertake further system-wide analyses so as to develop and support the implementation of continuous improvement measures across the different areas of activity. The Agency considers it important to be seen as a partner for quality assurance and not simply as an external referee.

27 The Panel believes that there is more work to be done in this area of enhancement activity, subject to provision of appropriate resources. In addition to the production of analytical reports and convening developmental events relating to the generic, sector-wide aspects of AGAE's work, the Panel believes there may be opportunities for cross-regional studies with other Spanish regional quality assurance agencies.

#### **Panel judgement:**

Substantially compliant

## **2.6 Part 3: European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies**

### **2.6.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education**

#### **Standard:**

The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

#### **Guidelines:**

The standards for external quality assurance contained in Part 2 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. The standards reflect best practices and experiences gained through the development of external quality assurance in Europe since the early 1990s. It is therefore important that these standards are integrated into the processes applied by external quality assurance agencies towards the higher education institutions. The standards for external quality assurance should together with the standards for external quality assurance agencies constitute the basis for professional and credible external quality assurance of higher education institutions.

### **AGAE compliance**

28 The Panel confirms that, as described in the previous section, AGAE's processes and procedures are based on, and are compliant with, Part 2 of the ESG.

### **Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

### **2.6.2 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 comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

### **AGAE compliance**

29 AGAE was established by the autonomous government for the purpose, *inter alia*, of quality assuring higher education providers. Its legal identity and responsibilities are fully underpinned by an interconnected raft of national and regional legislation. The *National Organic Law 6/2001*, December 21st (Title V) and the *Regional Andalusian University Law* established the legislative and legal framework for the activities that AGAE may carry out. It specifically defines the aim of AGAE as being the *assessment, accreditation and certification of quality within the terms of reference of the Universities and Higher Education Institutions in Andalusia*.

30 The current functions, based on the original mandate received by AGAE can be listed as follows:

#### **Evaluation of Institutional quality**

1. Evaluation of quality assurance in higher education institutions, including the assessment of departments, centres, degrees and services.
2. Assessment of proposals for the new Postgraduate Programmes (M.Sc. and Ph.D.) of Andalusian public Universities

#### **Teaching Staff Accreditation**

- 3 Assessment of teaching and research activities of temporary staff to report to the Universities for confirmation in post
4. Emeritus Professors Evaluation.
5. Docentia programme: development of a programme for the evaluation of teaching quality. In this program all of the Andalusian Universities (except for the University of Seville) are involved and have worked in a common model for the evaluation of the Andalusian University Teaching staff. The AGAE has been a key partner in the programme.

#### **Other teaching staff assessment and evaluation**

- 6 Assessment of staff for the award of 'Good teaching performance incentives' (i.e. additional salary rewards).

#### **Evaluation of Research Programmes, groups and initiatives**

7. Research Projects Assessment and Evaluation.
8. Research Activity Evaluation of the PAIDI Groups.
9. Other Research Activities Evaluation: Research Incentives.

AGAE is a body operationally fully independent from the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise (CICE), although as a recipient of public funds, it is ultimately accountable for its operations under national Spanish law to the Regional Ministry. AGAE has full legal independent

identity and manages its own assets with which it carries out its functions. It is independent of institutional influence in its decisions. The Agency's assessment, accreditation and certification activities are considered to be administrative activities, subject to public law and its safeguards. The legislative recognition of AGAE with its own legal identity and powers in assessment, accreditation and certification meet the requirement for this standard.

**Panel judgement:**  
Fully compliant

### **2.6.3 Activities**

**Standard:**

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.

**Guidelines:**

These may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the agency.

### **AGAE compliance**

31 The *National Organic Law 6/2001*, December 21st (Title V) and the *Regional Andalusian University Law* established the legislative and legal framework for the activities that AGAE carries out on a regular basis. It specifically defines the aim of AGAE as being the *assessment, accreditation and certification of quality within the terms of reference of the Universities and Higher Education Institutions in Andalusia*.

AGAE's programme of activity is driven by a strategic plan. The annual programme of activities is communicated through the Service Letter, the annual Activities Report, and the AGAE website. The programme of activities is very wide, with many of these activities being relatively new. Overall, reviews are conducted on a regular basis for the purpose of this Standard. However as already discussed under Standard 2.4.7, the Panel recommends that it would now be timely formally to establish an integrated forward cycle for the many different types of review.

**Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

#### **2.6.4 Resources**

##### **Standard:**

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

#### **AGAE compliance**

32 The AGAE annual budget is derived from the general budget for the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise and therefore it has to be approved by the Andalusian Parliament. This requirement demands budget transparency as well as viability. The annual budget is negotiated annually with the Regional Ministry of Finance. AGAE has full autonomy with regard to the distribution and annual monitoring of the budget, which is allocated in accordance with the plan of annual activities. Income is allocated to meet staff costs and to fund the agreed annual programme of activity. The accounts of AGAE are subject to an annual financial audit by the Auditor General. In 2008 AGAE's total income was some €4.3m. AGAE's offices are located in Cordoba, Spain and are equipped with appropriate levels of IT and with appropriate reference materials. The Panel notes from the self evaluation that AGAE plans to improve the software packages used to support certain quality assurance procedures for university teaching staff accreditation and research evaluation. AGAE's staffing comprises the Agency's permanent staff (fourteen employees) and a pool of more than xxx trained reviewers drawn from the Andalusian administration, public universities and research centres. The Agency has also a legal advisor and thirteen coordinators of scientific committees drawn from different areas of academic expertise. AGAE also designates advisers and experts for each activity, who contribute to the work of sub-committees and working groups supporting the development and delivery of quality assurance processes.

The Panel believes that the Agency's current level of resource is sufficient for immediate purposes and was particularly impressed by the quality, commitment and dedication of the core staff. The Panel was told of a possible new funding structure for the Agency, whereby it would receive a top-sliced percentage allocation from the overall budget for Andalusian Higher Education. Growing areas of activity relating particularly to the need to establish and support the logistics of a robust cyclical approach to the key processes, the need to engage more robustly with the cross-institutional quality assurance agenda and the longer term migration to the new AKA structure, will almost certainly in the Panel's view require further investment in AGAE. The Panel has also suggested to the Director that the Agency has now reached a point of maturity in its development where the appointment of a senior professional manager to support the Director in taking oversight of some of the key processes might be appropriate.

##### **Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

### **2.6.5 Mission statement**

#### **Standard:**

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

#### **Guidelines:**

These statements should describe the goals and objectives of agencies' quality assurance processes, the division of labour with relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the cultural and historical context of their work. The statements should make clear that the external quality assurance process is a major activity of the agency and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. There should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statements are translated into a clear policy and management plan.

### **AGAE compliance**

33 The goals and functions of AGAE are clearly defined in the Andalusian Universities Law and incorporated in AGAE's statutes. They are outlined on the website and in the Agency's Service Letter to institutions. To translate these requirements into a clear policy and management plan, AGAE uses strategic planning to set the main goals and objectives over a set period of time. Currently AGAE is operating under the 2008-2010 strategic plan. In turn, the strategic plan is used as the basis for a published annual operating plan. The Agency has been given an important role as controller and promoter of quality in relation to higher education and research in Andalusia. In order to perform this function to the advantage of Andalusian Knowledge System, it was necessary for the Agency to plan carefully how to best organize the work in a long-term perspective. Therefore, there was a need for a well-considered Strategic Plan. Work on the Strategic Plan started in February 26th, 2008 after agreement by the Board of Directors. The Agency together with two external experts began a dynamic process for developing a Strategic Plan. All Agency employees have been active in the process and made substantial contributions to the final result. An annual review will be undertaken of the need for changes in the plan on the basis of changing circumstances and general trends in society. The strategic plan serves as the foundation for the annual activity plans elaborated each year. The annual activity plans will also show the prioritisation of AGAE tasks at any given time.

34 AGAE continues to develop its own internal quality assurance system. It has been mindful of this ever since the Agency was first established in 2005 and has worked systematically on the development of a satisfactory system. The quality assurance system covers all of AGAE's activities and ensures that the Agency's tasks are performed efficiently to a high standard, and that instances of poor quality in the work are identified and appropriate remedies are implemented. To date, the quality policy has focused on two areas: the code of ethics and external evaluation on the basis of the European model. The implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2010 includes the development of a *quality manual* that will formally

set out the quality policy of the Agency for its stakeholders and providers. This *quality manual* is a key part of a *quality plan* recently approved by the Board of Directors.

**Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

### **2.6.6 Independence**

#### **Standard:**

Agencies should be independent to the extent both 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.

#### **Guidelines:**

An agency will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as:

- its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts)
- the definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence
- while relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.

### **AGAE compliance**

35 The Agency is headed by a Board of Directors (Council) consisting of eleven members. The Executive Director is appointed by the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise from among 'individuals of recognised prestige' in University and research circles, for a period of four years, on a renewable basis. The Board of Directors is made up of the Regional Minister of Innovation, Science and Enterprise (President), the Executive Director of AGAE (Vice-President), five members proposed independently by the Andalusian Board of Universities, three members from AGAE's organisational structure and a Secretary General. The Board's main functions are to set and monitor AGAE's strategic objectives according to the Andalusian University Act, to approve the annual programme of activities and to be accountable for oversight of AGAE's finances.

36 The Executive Director of AGAE is responsible to the Board for the operation of the Agency. He is supported in this task by three committees with delegated functions in the following areas:

- *Higher Education (HEA);*
- *Research, Development and Innovation*
- *Management.*

The Committees meet as many times as necessary each year. In addition there is an *Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation* Committee composed of the executive director, individuals responsible for the different specialized area committees and a group of external experts to validate and ratify decisions made under the AGAE's functions. The AGAE

has up to thirteen responsible for different subject clusters. These expert *coordinators of scientific committees* give advice on the different functions of the Agency regarding technical matters relating to the accreditation, evaluation and certification of higher education and of research. They support the decision making process by identifying and contacting panel experts (all from outside Andalusia), summarizing the results of the different panels, providing advice and making final assessments when necessary and overall, ensuring that the different procedures are followed in a coherent way so as to guarantee quality and efficiency in the process. The AGAE has also a legal advisor in charge of providing advice on how to deal with the legislative changes, and with appeals that are processed through the common courts of justice. In addition, there are currently 14 full-time staff employees. The Agency has undertaken a satisfaction survey amongst stakeholders and as part of its strategic planning proposes to build on and extend more formally feedback mechanisms relating to its own performance.

37 In order for the Agency to be able to meet obligations deriving from both the Spanish and Andalusian legislation and to have adequate safeguarding of its operational independence and professionalism, AGAE has full legal independent status as an autonomous organization (*organismo autono*). It has its own assets with which it carries out its functions. The Agency makes its decisions in an independent manner and is independent of influence from government, institutional and other sources (AGAE statutes, art. 9). The Agency also safeguards the *technical independence* of the advisory committees and panel experts in making their independent judgments; this is underpinned by both the internal quality system and the principles established in the code of ethics. The operational independence of AGAE from the government is thereby fully safeguarded by way of official protocols.

It is however customary in Spain for all autonomous organizations to be nominally headed by the highest authority of the Ministry to which they relate. This requirement stems from financial controls by the Finance Ministry. As a result, the Regional Minister is nominally the president of many Boards, including that for AGAE.

The Panel has explored the issue of independence in some depth, including a meeting with Secretary General for the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise. It has been able to determine that AGAE acts entirely independently in making its judgements. All reports, decisions, judgements, recommendations and commendations are those of AGAE and its contracted reviewers. The Panel has confirmed that the procedures and methods operated by AGAE are determined by the Board in the light of consultations with stakeholders. The final decision on the appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken entirely within AGAE, according to the published procedures. The Panel accepts that the AGAE and its Board are structured in such a way as to secure operational independence from HEIs and Government in its day-to-day operations. Upcoming new legislation is likely to re-balance the composition of the Board so as to increase representation from other stakeholders in higher

education and research, such as employers and students. The Panel believes that this will further strengthen the Board's overall capacity. The move to a new funding model based upon hypothecated funding through a top-slice on the Regional HE budget will further guarantee this operational independence in respect of 'autonomous responsibility for their operations'.

**Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

### **2.6.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies**

#### **Standard:**

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

#### **Guidelines:**

Agencies may develop and use other processes and procedures for particular purposes.

Agencies should pay careful attention to their declared principles at all times, and ensure both that their requirements and processes are managed professionally and that their conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even though the decisions are formed by groups of different people.

Agencies that make formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.

### **AGAE compliance**

38 The processes, criteria and procedures used by AGAE are predefined and publicly available on the AGAE website. The Agency manuals specify the processes and guidelines for assessment including details of the schedule and other operational factors. The evaluative processes generally involve (i) self-assessment by the subject of the quality assurance process; (ii) external assessment by a group of independent experts; (iii) publication of a report including decisions, recommendations and formal outcomes and (iv) a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations or conditions.

39 The evaluation of quality assurance in higher education institutions includes a self-evaluation stage that is compulsory in order for the external assessment to be carried out. Self-evaluation includes, without exception, sections where the strong and weak points of the dimensions analysed are considered, as a complement to the descriptive elements and evidence. Self-evaluation in new postgraduate programmes of Andalusian public universities has not been carried out yet, as these degree programmes have no graduates yet. All quality assurance processes that include self-evaluation are complemented by an external evaluation carried out by a committee of experts. A common feature of the processes for external quality assurance undertaken in AGAE is the appointment of panels of experts (preferably from outside Andalusia) to advise the Agency on whether the individual institutions and programmes and the proposed research projects meet the relevant criteria for quality. The external evaluation procedures are described in the methodology for each programme. The make-up of the committees of experts is

established according to the general characteristic of each programme. It always includes, however, experts of renowned prestige in other areas of Spain (outside Andalusia). In accordance with AGAE's quality procedures the typical committee make-up for the external evaluation is composed of two experts. They are supervised by the coordinators of AGAE's scientific committees in the programmes that involve *evaluation of research programmes, groups and initiatives* and in the assessment of new postgraduate programmes of Andalusian Public Universities. AGAE's coordinators act as a third expert in the Panel and participate in the final decision making. The *technical committees* are in charge of the programmes for teaching staff accreditation, emeritus professors' evaluation and good teaching performance incentives. *Individually constituted* external committees are created for the evaluation of quality assurance in higher education institutions.

40 External evaluations involve visits to the unit in the case of the evaluation of quality assurance in higher education institutions. In other cases, external evaluation is carried out according to the documentary analysis submitted by the stakeholders. The work of the external committees is described in the evaluation guidebook. The external committees are also provided with documentary information on the aims of the evaluation, the work of the committee, and the structure and preparation of the external evaluation report.

41 The profile of experts involved in all programmes is specified by AGAE. Expertise is guaranteed through the appointment of individuals with good knowledge of the discipline and/or quality assurance processes. Independence is promoted through the appointment of experts from outside the Andalusian system as much as possible, and by of statements regarding the non-conflict of interests with the units that are assessed. The AGAE annual report includes the aggregate outcomes of the different programmes of evaluated. These reports are prepared by AGAE's technical Unit and are approved by AGAE's Board of Directors. They are published in hard copy as well as on the Agency website. Specific results (whether positive or negative) are sent to the stakeholder (i.e. professor being accredited or receiving a good teaching incentive, government department with jurisdiction over universities, etc.).

42 AGAE's statutes and the committee regulations lay down that the proceedings of the Committees of evaluations and its sub-committees may be subject to a right of appeal before the AGAE Standing Committee, the result of which is final. Pending the putting into effect of accreditation systems due to a formal decision procedure that is required concerning quality assurance, AGAE has put together various mechanisms for units that are being assessed to send comments and proposals for corrections to AGAE reports to the Committees of evaluation and its sub-committees Professional management of the processes is supported by: a) the professional experience of staff in the AGAE technical unit, which is made up of graduates and PhD holders with appropriate experience in university quality assurance, b) the appropriate selection and full training of panel experts

Coherence of work methods is ensured through: training of the external assessment committees and the use of draft scripts for reports available to the assessment committees. External committees also include experts in quality assurance from AGAE itself (i.e. coordinators of AGAE's scientific committees). In relation to this, there is one AGAE working party made up of the heads of technical quality units.

The Panel is thus able to confirm that AGAE institutional review processes include self-evaluation; external assessments and site visits by a group of experts; publication of a report; and a follow-up procedure to review actions taken following the recommendations made. Detailed information regarding these processes is publicly available.

As already discussed in section 2.4.6, there is however some variation in AGAE's approach to the evaluation of improvement plans across the different strands of its range of activities and the Panel welcomes AGAE's intention to review its protocols to achieve greater consistency of methodology. Similarly, student participation on AGAE's external committees is limited. As already discussed in section 2.4.4, the Panel notes that the inclusion of both students and international experts in review activity is fully within the spirit of the European Standards and Guidelines and would urge AGAE to move towards implementation as soon as practicable. The Panel would also recommend that AGAE systematise and fully embed procedures for the full evaluation of each individual review through questionnaires etc sent as appropriate to reviewers, students, and the institution

**Panel judgement:**

Substantially compliant

### **2.6.8 Accountability procedures**

#### **Standard:**

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

#### **Guidelines:**

These procedures are expected to include the following:

- 1 A published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, made available on its website.
- 2 Documentation which demonstrates that:
  - the agency's processes and results reflect its mission and goals of quality assurance
  - the agency has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts
  - the agency has reliable mechanisms that ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance procedure are subcontracted to other parties
  - the agency has in place internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from its own staff and council/Board); an internal reflection mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement); and an external feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from experts and reviewed institutions for future development) in order to inform and underpin its own development and improvement.
- 3 A mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years.

### **AGAE compliance**

43 The AGAE statutes declare that the Agency must act on the basis of rigour, quality and objectiveness in its processes, governed by the principle of transparency with regard to methods, standards and results, in reference to its accountability to society (article 9).

The Panel has established that AGAE has or is developing clear procedures at Executive and Board levels for planning and monitoring its own performance. Key processes include:

- preparation and monitoring of a Strategic Plan for 2008-2010, supported by an annual work plan,
- adoption by AGAE's Board of a code of ethics and an internal quality system manual for all those providing services or collaborating with the Agency

AGAE publishes an annual report with details of its activities to ensure that its processes and results reflect its mission and goals.

The appointment and recruitment procedures for AGAE reviewers and auditors ensure there are no conflicts of interest. Recently AGAE (for the purpose of this evaluation) surveyed external experts and the experience has convinced it to make follow-up questionnaires mandatory. A survey of stakeholders (including Government departments with jurisdiction over universities, quality technical units from universities, and university

teaching staff and researchers and Panel experts) was recently undertaken for the purposes of getting some feedback about the level of satisfaction they have across a range of AGAE functions. In an attempt to measure the degree to which stakeholders believe the Agency is fulfilling the principles of independence, objectivity, transparency, efficiency, distance and fairness. Questionnaires were sent to approximately 11,000 stakeholders. A total of 1,782 responses were received (16.2% response rate). Overall, users and providers considered that the service offered by AGAE is effective, transparent, consistent, systematic, fair and very supportive with 68.2% of respondents reporting themselves as overall very highly satisfied. AGAE intends to develop and routinely implement this external feedback mechanism

Finally, AGAE must undergo a mandatory cyclical external review of its activities at least once every five years in order to confirm continued membership of ENQA

**Panel judgement:**

Fully compliant

## **Assessment of University Teaching Staff and Evaluation of Research programmes, groups and initiatives**

44 In addition to the European context, the review was also designed to provide feedback on AGAE's broader role and tasks in the context of the Andalusian Knowledge System. Included within AGAE's responsibilities within the context of learning and research processes in the Andalusian Knowledge System are:

- teaching staff assessment programme and
- research grants evaluation procedures

## **Research in Andalusia**

45 Research plays an increasingly important role in the academic life of universities and research institutes in Andalusia. The recently approved *Andalusian Science and Knowledge Law* of 3rd December 2007 sets out the basic organisation of the Andalusian Knowledge System, part of which relates to the intention of the autonomous government of Andalusia to ensure and enhance the quality of research. The new legislation encourages and reinforces technology transfer and cooperation between the public University system and industry and companies in the area of Research, Development and Innovation (R+D+I), including the creation of companies related to the university sector (spin-out). This is supported by a scheme for supporting and financing R+D+I projects and the creation of technologically-based companies that guarantee sustainable development. The Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Scheme is one of the programmes devoted to stimulate scientific and technological development in the research field. A sum of more than 25,400 million euros has been earmarked for injection into the University system for the period 2007-2013 to stimulate scientific and technological development in the research and business fields. In this project, AGAE is responsible for designing the assessment model and the standards and criteria of quality applicable to R+D+I projects to be financed under this scheme, with special emphasis on assessing:

- Performance criteria of research personnel, introducing the concept of applied research results as an evaluation criterion.
- R+D+I grant proposals according to the quality, capacity and viability of achieving objectives set *ex ante* and *ex post*.
- Scientific results attained by the Technological Agents determined in the Regional Plan for the Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Scheme
- Individual research group performance, according to the scientific and technological results obtained.

## **Panel judgement**

The Panel has explored the operation of the different strands of the scheme through a review of associated documentation and through a range of interviews with stakeholders and believes the assessment model to be robust.

### **Assessment of University Teaching Staff**

46 The Agency also performs a number of functions relating to the assessment of individual University staff, as follows:

- assessment of the teaching and research activities of temporary staff for report to the Universities for confirmation of tenure
- evaluations for the award of the status of emeritus professor
- evaluations for awards under the good teaching performance incentives programme.

The Agency is also a development partner in a project (Docentia), for developing procedures for the assessment of teaching performance. This is a national initiative led by the national Ministry of Education. From its brief exploration of work to date, the Panel expressed some concerns about the complexity of the methodologies being explored through the project and a perceived lack of student input in the final stages of evaluation. AGAE is not a lead partner and this work does not impact on AGAE's overall performance in relation to this Standard.

### **Panel judgement**

The Panel has explored the operation of the schemes through a review of associated documentation and through a range of interviews with stakeholders and believes the assessment models to be robust. The Panel has suggested that the Agency review the extent to which common or shared methodologies can be developed across cognate schemes, together with increased data sharing.

### **Panel Overview**

#### **Assessment of University Teaching Staff and Evaluation of Research programmes, groups and initiatives**

The panel gave a good deal of attention to both these strands of activity but recognised that a majority are activities which are unique to Spanish regional and national legislative requirements. The Panel found a consistency on the part of the Agency in its thorough, well planned, transparent and fair methodologies and practices. The Panel is content that the Agency will bring this approach to the new activities which it will be required to tackle. However the Agency will find itself under serious pressure unless current promises of additional resources are fulfilled.

**Overall Conclusions**

47 AGAE has been set a very challenging agenda across a very wide range of responsibilities. As an organisation with a strong team ethos, it is fit for purpose, well-integrated, well-led and widely respected. It is making a major contribution to the maintenance of quality and standards within the fast-evolving Andalusian Knowledge System

AGAE's overall performance against the standards of the ESG is very high. The Panel would recommend that AGAE be confirmed in membership of ENQA for the standard period of five years.

**AGAE to check and update list of people/titles against actual attendance please**

**APPENDIX 1**

**Itinerary for AGAE site visit**

**Wednesday 19 November to Friday 21 November 2008**

**Day 1**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Panel meeting with:</b>
11:00	Chair and Secretary meet with Dr. Francisco Triguero, Secretary General for the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise	Dr. Francisco Triguero
Afternoon	Panel members arrive at the Cordoba Center Hotel	
18.00	Panel meets for discussion/planning in the Hotel, followed by dinner	

**Day 2**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Panel meeting with:</b>
8.30-9.30	Meeting with Dr. Elias Fereres Castiel, Director of AGAE	Dr. Elias Fereres
9.30-9.45	Private meeting of Panel	
9.45-10.45	Meeting with ALL AGAE staff	All AGAE staff
10.45-11.30	Meeting with members of the AGAE Board and the Secretary General	- Dr. Eduardo Fernandez-Camacho - Dr. Juan Antonio Devesa-Alcaraz - Dr. María-Teresa Sanchez
11.30-11.45	Private meeting of panel	
11.45-12.45	Meeting with regional employer stakeholders. Overview of Andalusian University System and Regional Employment Prospects	- Dr. Manuel Pérez-Yruela
12.45-13.00	Private meeting of Panel	
13.00-14.00	Meeting with undergraduate and postgraduate students with experience of AGAE's quality assurance procedures	- Ms. Claudia Rios-Gómez - Ms. Silvia Lavandera-Ponce - Ms. Azucena Rodríguez - Mr. Joaquín González

14.00-14.15	Private meeting of Panel	
14.15-15.15	Lunch Meeting with senior representatives from Universities who are directly responsible for the management of quality assurance for teaching and learning in their institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dr. Carmen Pozo (UAL)</li> <li>- Dr. Cinta Canterla (UPO)</li> <li>- Dr. Juan-José Ruiz (UCO)</li> </ul>
15.15-15.30	Private meeting of Panel	
15.30-16.30	Meeting with external panel members who act for AGAE in the institutional quality assessment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dr. Serafín Larriba-Cabezudo</li> <li>- Dr. José-Joaquín Mira-Solves-</li> </ul>
16.30-16.45	Private meeting of Panel	
16.45-17.45	Meeting with selected University staff, who have experienced teaching staff assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dr. Alonso Rodríguez-Navarro.</li> <li>- Dr. Elena Escudero-Hernández</li> </ul>
17.45-18.45	Meeting with Co-ordinators of AGAE's Scientific Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dr. Pablo J. Zarco-Tejada</li> <li>- Dr. Miguel Toro-Bonilla</li> <li>- Dr. Nieves Pascual-Soler</li> </ul>
18.45	Private meeting of Panel and close	
	Dinner and panel discussion	

**Day 3**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Panel meeting with:</b>
8.30-9.30	Meeting with members of the Research, Development and Innovation Committee and with senior AGAE staff specifically responsible for this programme	- Dr. José- María Vega - Mr. Javier Bajo
9.30-9.45	Private meeting of Panel	
9.45-10.45	Meeting with representatives from the technical committees for teaching staff assessment, for the teaching incentives programme, and for other teaching staff assessment programmes, together with senior AGAE staff specifically responsible for these programmes	- Ms. Inmaculada Fernández - Mr. Juan-Carlos Fernández-Luque - Dr. José-Antonio Domínguez-Machuca - Dra. Nieves Pascual-Soler
10.45-11.00	Private meeting of Panel	
11.15-12.15	Meeting with selected University staff, who have experience research evaluation	- Dr. Miquel Valcarcel-Casas
12.15-12.30	Private meeting of Panel	
12.30-13.30	Meeting with members of the Higher Education Committee and senior AGAE staff specifically responsible for the programme for evaluation of institutional quality	- Dr. José-Manuel Esteve - Ms. Esther Megía - Dr. Pilar Romero
13.30-14.30	Private meeting of Panel	
15.00-15.45	Lunch Meeting with the Evaluation, Certification and Accreditation Committee (AGAE's internal QA	- Dr. José-Manuel Esteve - Dr. José-María Vega - Dr. María-Teresa Sánchez (R) - Dr. Joaquina Laffarga-Briones - Dr. Ramon Valle-Cabrera - Dr, Esperanza Vera-Toscano

	committee)	
15.45-16.30	Private meeting of Panel	
16.30-17.00	Meeting with Dr. Elías Fereres, (Director of AGAE) to clarify any outstanding issues	Dr. Elías Fereres
17.00-18.00	Private meeting of Panel	
Time to be confirmed	Dinner	

**AGAE to check and update as necessary please**

**APPENDIX 2**

**Documentation provided**

**1** AGAE web page:

[www.agae.es](http://www.agae.es)

English version:

<http://www.agae.es/English/>

**2** Annotated document Schedule from the AGAE submission, with web links to most of the documents. All the documents were available in paper format during the site visit.

Self evaluation document for confirmation of full membership of ENQA

**E01** Plan for the Quality of Andalusian Universities

**<http://www.agae.es/include/files/institucional/plan/PlanCalidadUniversidades.pdf>**

**E02** Guidelines for the self-evaluation report for institutional assessment

**<http://www.agae.es/include/files/institucional/plan/GuiaAutoevaluacionServiciosUniversitarios.pdf>**

**E03** Instructions and guidelines for the external evaluation of the institutional assessment

<http://www.agae.es/include/files/institucional/plan/GuiaEvaluacionExternaServiciosUniversitarios.pdf>

**E04** Decree 56/2005, January 21st on the Regulation of Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions

Not available in the current website. Available in paper format during site visit

**E05** Decree 1509/2005, December 16th which modifies Decree

56/2005, January 21st on the Regulation of Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions

Not available in the current website. Available in paper format during site visit

**E06** Decree 1393/2007, October 29, 2007 on the Regulation of Degree and Postgraduate Programmes in Higher Education Institutions

Available in paper format during site visit

**E07** Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Postgraduate Program Implementation

[www.agae.es/include/files/institucional/Guia\\_Acreditacion\\_Postgrados\\_Oficiales\\_080917.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/institucional/Guia_Acreditacion_Postgrados_Oficiales_080917.pdf)

[www.agae.es/include/files/institucional/Procedimiento\\_Acreditacion\\_Postgrados\\_Oficiales\\_080917.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/institucional/Procedimiento_Acreditacion_Postgrados_Oficiales_080917.pdf)

**E08** 'Dublin' descriptors

Available in paper format during site visit

- E09** Spanish University Act 6/2001, December 21<sup>st</sup>  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/LOU.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/LOU.pdf)
- E10** Andalusian University Act (Law 15/2003, December 22nd -LAU)  
[www.agae.es/include/files/agae/lau.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/agae/lau.pdf)
- E11** National Organic University Law 4/2007, April 12th which modifies the Spanish University Act 6/2001  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/LeyOrganica4-2007.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/LeyOrganica4-2007.pdf)
- E12** University teaching staff accreditation Policy, Criteria and Processes December 2005  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/OrdenCriterios.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/OrdenCriterios.pdf)  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/Convocatoria.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/Convocatoria.pdf)  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/Criterios\\_PCD.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/Criterios_PCD.pdf)  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/Criterios\\_PAD.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/Criterios_PAD.pdf)  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/Guia.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/Guia.pdf)
- E13** AGAE Supplementary Guidelines for the Accreditation of university teaching staff December 2005  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/ConvocatoriaAnexos.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/ConvocatoriaAnexos.pdf)
- E14** Resolution of February 16th 2006 that make public the composition of the technical committees, as well as the processes approved by the Board of Directors of AGAE  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/resolucion\\_16\\_febrero.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/resolucion_16_febrero.pdf)
- E15** Resolution of April 3rd 2006 that modifies the composition of the technical committee in Law and Social Sciences  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/Resolucion20060403.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/Resolucion20060403.pdf)
- E16** Resolution of December 14th 2006 that update the composition of the technical committees in charge of university teaching staff accreditation  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/Resolucion20061214.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/Resolucion20061214.pdf)
- E17** Resolution of March 19th 2007 that modifies the composition of the technical committees in charge of university teaching staff accreditation, as well as the appeals committee  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/ModificacionComites.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/ModificacionComites.pdf)
- E18** Resolution of February 1st 2008 that update the composition of the technical committees in charge of university teaching staff accreditation  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/Resolucion20080201.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/acreditacion/normativa/Resolucion20080201.pdf)
- E19** AGAE Guidelines for the evaluation of emeritus professors

[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/emeritos/01\\_Manual\\_procedimiento\\_inter no\\_Profesorado\\_emeritos\\_AGAE.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/emeritos/01_Manual_procedimiento_inter no_Profesorado_emeritos_AGAE.pdf)

**E20** University teaching staff evaluation: Teaching, research and management incentives. Policy, Criteria and Processes for 2006-2008. May 2006  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/complementos/Orden.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/complementos/Orden.pdf)

**E21** Supplementary Guidelines for the teaching, research and management incentives of university teaching staff: Salary and complements. December 2003  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/complementos/acuerdo.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/complementos/acuerdo.pdf)

**E22** Resolution of February 21st 2008 that make public the composition of the teaching incentives committees approved by the University Directorate (DGU) from the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/complementos/ComposicionSubcomisionesBOJA2008.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/complementos/ComposicionSubcomisionesBOJA2008.pdf)

**E23** Official Agreement between AGAE and ANECA to manage the Docentia Programme  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E24** ENQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA. Standard 1.4  
[http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG\\_v03.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_v03.pdf)

**E25** Guidelines for the development and implementation of evaluation processes within the DOCENTIA framework.  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/docentia/CONVOCATORIA.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/docentia/CONVOCATORIA.pdf)  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/docentia/CALENDARIO.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/docentia/CALENDARIO.pdf)  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/docentia/Comision6\\_Evaluacion-DOCENTIA.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/docentia/Comision6_Evaluacion-DOCENTIA.pdf)  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/docentia/resumenDocAndalucia.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/docentia/resumenDocAndalucia.pdf)  
[http://www.aneca.es/active/active\\_docentia.asp](http://www.aneca.es/active/active_docentia.asp)

**E26** AGAE Guidelines and criteria for Research Project Assessment (Law of March 15th, 2007 in BOJA 63, March 29th, 2007 pp. 11-23)  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E27** Standards and Guidelines for Research Activity Evaluation of the PAIDI groups (Law of September 3rd, 2007 in BOJA 187, September 21st, 2007. pp. 6-9  
[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/investigacion/BOJA\\_GRUPOS\\_2007.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/investigacion/BOJA_GRUPOS_2007.pdf)

**E28** Guidelines and Criteria for other research activities evaluation for the period 2006-2008 (Law of September 3rd, 2006 in BOJA 111, June 12th, 2006. pp. 8-15)  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E29** The Andalusian Research, Development and Innovation Scheme (*Plan Andaluz de I+D+I or PAIDI*)  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E30** Strategic Plan 2008-2010  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E31** Service Letter (BOJA 125 of June 25th, 2008)

[www.agae.es/include/files/calidad/carta.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/calidad/carta.pdf)

**E32** Document with definition of AGAE's Key-Processes

Available in paper format during site visit

**E33** Guidelines and Criteria Manuals for the whole range of AGAE's actions for Quality Assurance

Available in paper format during site visit

**E34** Panel experts database management

<http://www.agaeserver.es/bancoEvaluadores/>

**E35** Map of AGAE's key-processes

Available in paper format during site visit

**E36** REACU's Minutes of June 6th, 2008 regarding the follow-up of post-graduate programmes

Available in paper format during site visit

**E37** Standards and Guidelines for Research Incentives within the Andalusian Knowledge System for 2008-2013. (Law of December 11th, 2007 in BOJA 4, January 5th, 2008)

[www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/investigacion/MACROORDEN.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/profesorado/investigacion/MACROORDEN.pdf)

**E38** AGAE annual reports (2005-2007)

Available in paper format during site visit

**E39** AGAE Statutes: Decree 1/2005, January 11th in BOJA 9, January 14th 2005

[www.agae.es/include/files/agae/estatutos.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/agae/estatutos.pdf)

**E40:** Decree 117/2008 of April 29th with the structure of the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise (CICE).

Available in paper format during site visit

**E41** Innovation and Modernisation scheme for Andalusia (PIMA)

Available in paper format during site visit

**E42** The Andalusian Science and Knowledge Law of the 3rd December 2007

Available in paper format during site visit

**E43** Action Plan of the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise 2008-2012

Available in paper format during site visit

**E44** AGAE Code of Ethics

[www.agae.es/include/files/calidad/codigoEtico.pdf](http://www.agae.es/include/files/calidad/codigoEtico.pdf)

**E45** AGAE's website ([www.agae.es](http://www.agae.es))

[www.agae.es](http://www.agae.es)

**E46** Report of the annual budget from the Regional Ministry of Finances 2007

Available in paper format during site visit

**E47** General Law from the Tax and Revenue Agency of the Autonomous Government of Andalusia –Ley General de la Hacienda Publica de la Comunidad Autonoma de Andalusia (art. 80.2)  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E48** Reglamento de Intervencion de la Junta de Andalusia –Intervention legislation. (art. 45 and 46)  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E49** Instruccion 4/2003 de 30 de Junio de la Intervencion General de la Junta de Andalusia, por la que se dictan normas relativas a la contabilizacion y el control de las operaciones registradas en el Sistema de Registro de Facturas y Fondos de Organo Gestor del Sistema Integrado Jupiter (FOG). Intervention legislation  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E50** Law 6/1997, dated April 14 about the Functioning of the State General Administration (BOE April 15th, 1997) and its updates (Ley 6/1997, de 14 de abril, de Organizacion y Funcionamiento de la Administracion General del Estado)  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E51** Functional organization chart of AGAE by sections and professional categories  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E52** Short CVs of the management and experts specialised in assessment  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E53** Employment and working conditions of regular AGAE employees  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E54** Plan for the prevention of risks at work. Law 54/2003 of December 12th for the Prevention of risks at work (BOE 298)  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E55** AGAE Inventory  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E56** Regulation of public enterprise in Andalusia: Guidelines for the procurement of material resources  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E57** AGAE's Quality Plan  
<http://www.agae.es/include/files/calidad/manual.pdf>

**E58** Official document signed by panel expert to ensure the nonexistence of a conflict of interest  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E59** Recognised degree of appeal process in the different AGAE activities  
Available in paper format during site visit

**E60** Final evaluation reports for the whole range of AGAE's actions for Quality Assurance  
Available in the annual reports

**E61** Stakeholders Survey: Document of Basic Results  
Available in paper format during site visit